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INSIDER

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prequels enhanced
the mythos!



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on the return of Ahsoka
Tano in *Star Wars Rebels*!

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"I admit, Ahsoka's a little rough around the edges, but with a great deal of training... and patience... she might amount to something."—Anakin Skywalker, *Star Wars: The Clone Wars*, 2008

When Ahsoka Tano was first introduced in the *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* movie, it's fair to say that there were some dissenting voices within the fan community. "Who is this previously unmentioned Padawan?" "Won't a spikey teen sidekick get in the way of the action and adventure?" "Won't she derail the friendship between Anakin and Obi-Wan?"

But thanks to strong writing and animation, powerful story arcs, and a truly bravura performance from Ashley Eckstein, Ahsoka can stand shoulder-to-shoulder with any of the true icons of the saga. The Togruta has grown in the same way that Luke Skywalker grew over the course of the original trilogy. Like Mark Hamill's portrayal of Luke, Ahsoka's development provided a focal point to the epic story of a galaxy at war. And now she's back, stronger than ever in *Star Wars Rebels*. I'm willing to bet a few of those naysayers from 2008 punched the air as she climbed down the ladder—to reveal herself as the mysterious "Fulcrum!"

May the Force be with you...
Always.



Jonathan Wilkins,
Editor

STAR WARS

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2015

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DOCKING BAY

STAR WARS

THIS ISSUE....

"YOU'RE RECKLESS, LITTLE ONE. YOU NEVER WOULD HAVE MADE IT AS OBI-WAN'S PADAWAN... BUT YOU MIGHT MAKE IT AS MINE."—ANAKIN SKYWALKER, *STAR WARS: THE CLONE WARS*, 2008



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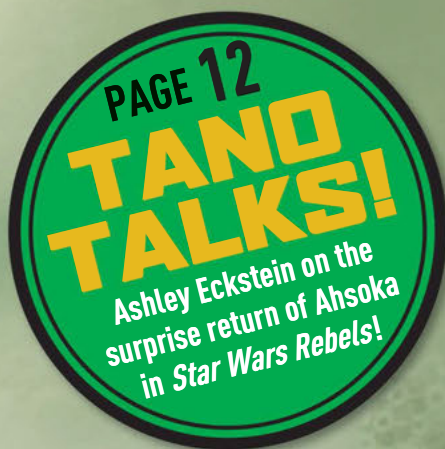
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LAUNCH PAD

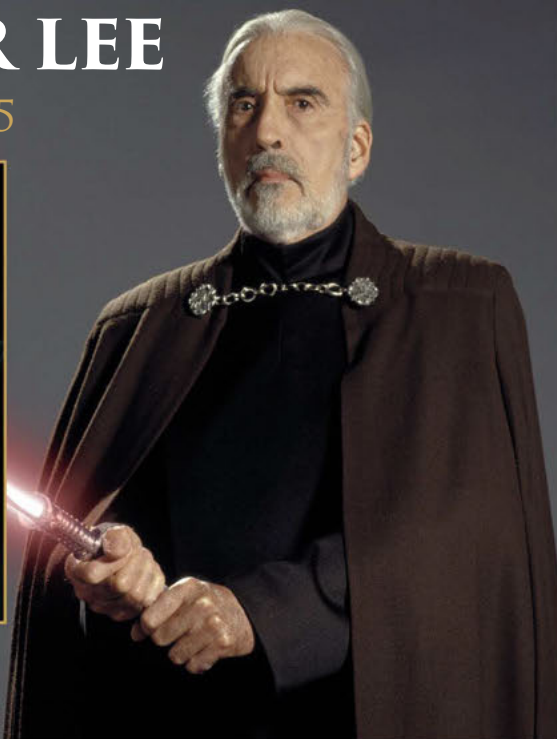
ALL THE NEWS FROM THE *STAR WARS* UNIVERSE

SIR CHRISTOPHER LEE

27 MAY 1922 - 7 JUNE 2015



THE ACTOR BEHIND *STAR WARS*' COUNT DOOKU—ONE OF HIS MANY ICONIC ROLES—PASSED AWAY ON 7TH JUNE 2015, AFTER A BRIEF ILLNESS.



Born Christopher Frank Carandini Lee in Belgravia, West London, he was the son of Lieutenant Colonel Geoffrey Trollope Lee and Contessa Estelle Marie. Moving to Switzerland after his parents' separation, Lee became the step-cousin of *James Bond* author Ian Fleming as a result of his mother's second marriage, and later attended Wellington College where his love of fencing began.

During the Second World War, Lee had numerous secondments, including a stint with the Special Operations Executive and the Long Range Desert Patrol, which was the precursor of the SAS. Famously, he later declined to give any details of this service.

Lee's screen acting career began in 1947 with a small part in Terence Young's gothic romance *Corridor of Mirrors*. Over the course of the next decade he acted in 30 films, building a body of work that led to one of his most infamous roles: Count Dracula in the Hammer Films series.

He played the iconic vampire 10 times between 1958 and 1976, but it was during production of his first Hammer film, *The Curse Of Frankenstein* in 1957, that he forged a lifelong friendship with Peter Cushing. They would go on to act together in 20 films.

Memorable projects such as *The Wicker Man* (1973), *The Man With The Golden Gun* (1974), *Gremlins 2: The New Batch* (1990), and *Sleepy Hollow* (1999) ensured that Lee captured the imagination of more than one generation. When it came to casting Saruman for *The Lord of the Rings* (2001–2003) and *The Hobbit* (2012–2014) trilogies, who else could have played the duplicitous sorcerer so well? Indeed, Lee was the only

member of the production to have met J.R.R. Tolkien in person, and faithfully reread *The Lord of the Rings* once a year.

In 1992, Lee appeared in Lucasfilm's *The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles* as Count Ottokar Graf Czernin, and was employed by George Lucas again when he cast Sir Christopher as Count Dooku in 2002's *Star Wars: Attack of the Clones*, a role he would reprise in *Star Wars: Revenge of the Sith* (2005), before voicing the character in the animated movie *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* (2008).

Sir Christopher even entered the world of heavy metal music, most notably with his symphonic metal album *Charlemagne: By the Sword and the Cross*, which won the "Spirit of Metal" award at the 2010 Metal Hammer Golden Gods awards.

A renaissance man, his death is not only a great loss to *Star Wars*, but also to music, cinema, and the World in general.

SIR CHRISTOPHER LEE ON *STAR WARS*!

In 1978, 24 years before appearing in a *Star Wars* film, Sir Christopher Lee was asked about the success of *Star Wars*: "The interest in *Star Wars* doesn't surprise me at all. *Star Wars* gave the public what it wanted—and look at the response! I don't think the interest just happened, either. It's been around a long time, but because of low budgets and bad scripts people just haven't been getting what they wanted all along. I'm convinced that a well-made fantasy film will be more popular than any other type. The enchanted world is still the most enchanting world of all." —Sir Christopher Lee, *Famous Monsters* #146, August 1978

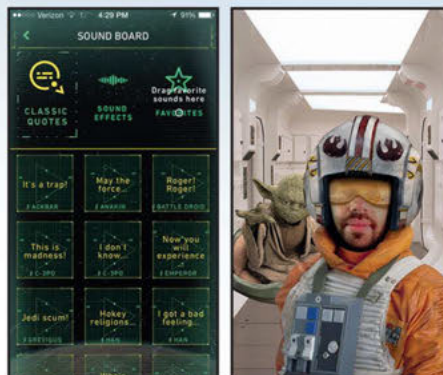
THE EMPIRE STRIKES APP!

By Dan Brooks

What do breaking *Star Wars* news, a selfie of yourself on Hoth dressed as a Jedi (with Yoda in the background, if you want), a lightsaber training activity, an augmented reality feature that brings BB-8 into your living room, and a shareable GIF of Darth Vader's "NOOOOOOO!" have in common? They're all in the new official *Star Wars* app.

Created by the StarWars.com team (of which I'm a part, full disclosure) in collaboration with Disney Interactive, the *Star Wars* app—released earlier this month, and available free for iOS and Android devices—brings together myriad digital content and experiences for core and casual fans alike. It was built from the ground up, incorporating StarWars.com news and social feeds with original features designed strictly for mobile. (Finally, thanks to the app's Soundboard section, you can play Mace Windu's "This party's over," when a party *is* actually over.) But the app is more than an aggregator: Right from installation, it's a unique *Star Wars* experience in its own right.

Upon launching the *Star Wars* app, fans are presented with options for three themes: "dark side," "light side," and "droid." Depending on which is chosen,



the app's interface changes, with real attention to detail. If you opt for "dark side," everything turns an aggressive red and cold white, button clicks emit sharp, Empire-esque droid hisses, and the Death Star hovers in the background! Go for the "light side," and you'll find a Jedi-like green outlines all content boxes, sounds are reminiscent of something out of a rebel base, and you're suddenly orbiting Tatooine. Pick "droid" and the app skin turns R2-blue, with friendly bleeps and bloops while the heroic astromech keeps you company. Should you feel inclined to make an Anakin-like allegiance change—and who are we to judge?—then fear not: You can switch themes at any time.

Once a selection is made, users land on a dashboard that acts as a portal to all

app content: The aforementioned features (Selfie, Force Trainer, GIFs, Augmented Reality, and Soundboard), as well as Countdown (a running clock to *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* and other important releases); a daily This Day in *Star Wars* History fact; weather (if it's freezing outside, chances are you'll get a Hoth-themed forecast, complete with new art of the ice world; if it's a beautiful day, you might get Naboo, showing Theed, the planet's grassy plains, or something else), and more. As the app is a direct connection to the latest *Star Wars* news, the team have done everything possible to make sure that fans get the latest information first. There is a completely customizable Official News Feed, pulling in the latest from StarWars.com as well as the official *Star Wars* Instagram, Facebook, and other channels. The dashboard also hosts a ticker for quick news snapshots. The app also includes, significantly, push notifications for *really* important stuff, like new trailers—the second they're released!

While the *Star Wars* app is filled with varied content, this is just the beginning, to quote Count Dooku. More additions are coming that promise to keep the app a living, evolving experience, one that takes advantage of everything mobile technology has to offer. Now the Force won't just be with you always—so will *Star Wars*!

ILM BRINGS STAR WARS TO LIFE!

Industrial Light & Magic, the visual effects company that was founded 40 years ago by George Lucas to create the groundbreaking effects for *Star Wars*, has announced that it will be bringing virtual and augmented-reality experiences to movie fans.

ILM's Experience Lab, or ILMxLab, combines the forces of ILM, Skywalker Sound, and Lucasfilm to make immersive experiences placing fans into photo-realistic versions of their favorite movie worlds.

The division's debut products will be *Star Wars*-based and are set to debut this fall.

Read more on this exciting news in the next issue of *Star Wars Insider*!

WIN! THE FIRST ORDER'S RIDE!

Thanks to our friends at Mattel we have six Comic-Con International: San Diego exclusive First Order stormtrooper Hot Wheels cars to give away! Simply write in to the address on page 3 under the subject line, "I'm faster and more intense!" by September 12!





BACK ON TOPPS!

Topps' *Star Wars* Chrome Perspectives: Jedi vs. Sith explores the viewpoints of the Jedi and the Sith in their seemingly endless battle for control of the galaxy.

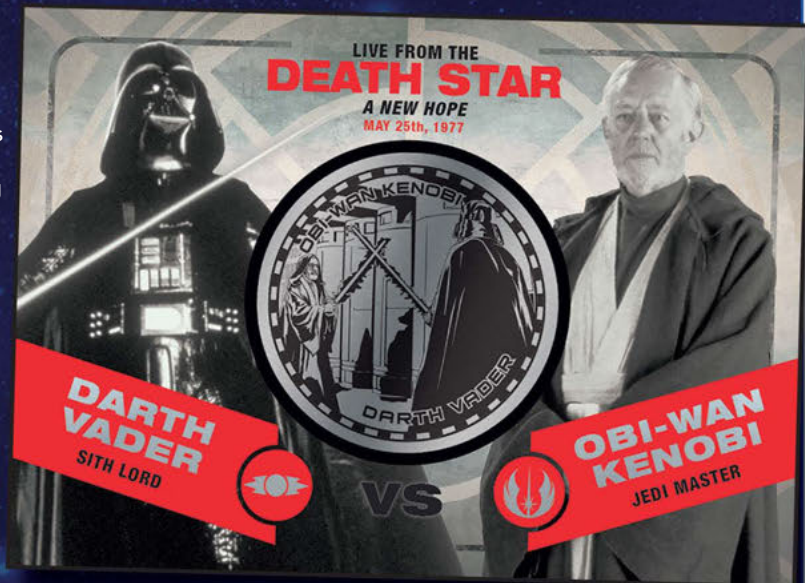
Along with 100 base cards to collect, the set includes five levels of parallels and comes loaded with hits (two per box)! Look for autographed cards (including duals and triples), chrome framed sketch cards, and printing plates. There are also three different types of medallion cards (gold, silver, and bronze) featuring the greatest Jedi vs. Sith battles. Released in August, they will be available exclusively in hobby shops. Each pack costs \$3.99, or \$95.76 per box.

We have a box each for five readers! Simply write in to the address on page 3 by September 8 with the subject line, "CARD WARS."

MORE TO SAY

Like Topps *Star Wars* cards at
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BATTLE READY!

ANOVOS ENLISTS IN THE FIRST ORDER AT CELEBRATION ANAHEIM

ANOVOS is a retailer specializing in screen-accurate uniforms and prop replicas from a variety of popular franchises, including, of course, *Star Wars*. Company co-founders Joe Salcedo and Dana Gasser tell us about preparing the First Order stormtrooper armor for Celebration Anaheim, and presenting it on the Celebration Stage during *The Force Awakens* panel. Interview by Amy Ratcliffe

Celebration Anaheim started with a bang. Lucasfilm president Kathleen Kennedy and *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* director and writer J.J. Abrams discussed the upcoming film and brought on special guests before sharing a new teaser trailer. The guests included cast members from astromechs to humans, and a special appearance by First Order stormtroopers. The stormtroopers wore armor made for the occasion by ANOVOS, a licensed provider of screen-accurate *Star Wars* costumes. It was the first time we saw the new stormtrooper look from head to toe.

Star Wars Insider: Were both of you on stage during *The Force Awakens* panel?

Joe Salcedo: That was kind of part of the deal. When Lucasfilm asked us to do the marketing, we said that we would do it as long as we actually got to literally participate.

How did ANOVOS first get involved in the marketing project?

Dana Gasser: It was an endeavor that came up when we were talking about what could be done for Celebration. There were some conversations with Lucasfilm, ideas passed back and forth, and we said, "You know what, we can debut this outfit and actually have it available so people can physically see it." It's a collaboration with Lucasfilm, ourselves, and other parties that helped and joined forces so that we could actually create it and get it done quickly.

What kind of time frame did you have?

DG: Basically, we got the approval to finally do something like this right around the end of December. If you look at the manufacturing window between December and April and also count the Chinese New Year, it really is a miracle that this was a success. We felt that there were a lot of challenges in front of us, but we knew if we fought hard enough, we would shake the tree and something good would come out. We really didn't believe all of it would come true, but it did come true and everything fell together nicely. There was a lot of coordination of different parties and a lot of effort, and really just the spirit of the fans helped us.

ANOVOS has worked with builders in the fan community in the past. Was that the case with the First Order armor?

JS: Absolutely. That was probably the most integral part of this whole deal. In order for us to be ready for this particular date, the deal was that it had to be part [unfinished] kits, part completed. The body was to be the kits [all of the same parts as the full ensemble, but requiring some trimming, assembly, and basic building skills]. The helmet was to be completed. We got that portion done overseas. The actual kit was done by members of the 501st Legion, some really good friends of ours over at Spectrum Graphics 2. They were the ones who really hammered out and engineered exactly how this thing would be vacuformed. The speed at which they did it was just astounding. **DG:** It was amazing for them to do something so quickly without ever having looked at it [in person] or worn it. Especially since the original item is not made from what this is, which is Vacuform. The original items are polyurethane. To translate the armor, to make it look exactly the way it does using a different material, is extremely difficult.

As fans, all we saw of the armor until the panel were glimpses in the first teaser trailer. What sort of reference material did you receive in order to create a screen-accurate replica?

JS: Lucasfilm was very generous with us. They gave us a lot of reference to work with. One of the things that was really important to Lucasfilm was that this thing had to look spot on. They provided us with all the materials possible, including pictures of the original, including, but not limited to, a lot of the parts that were engineered from the original production. They were shipped to us so that we could use them for our pieces. What you see here is an exact replica of the actual armor.

There were ten stormtroopers on stage during the panel. Are those all the kits you made or are there more?

DG: Part of the big push about this reveal is that we wanted to make a statement. The ten are just the tip of the iceberg. We actually coordinated with a lot of the local builders. ANOVOS reached out to the 501st and said to them, "How would you like an opportunity to be part of *Star Wars* history? And make a statement and be part of the first crowds to bring out the new *The Force Awakens* trooper so the world can see it?" They graciously responded.

Do you have plans to sell the First Order stormtrooper armor?

JS: We will sell them, but we can't sell them right now because of limitations. We do have

a set date, more toward Christmas, near to the movie release. The great thing is that we will have product ready that you can buy off the shelf. Most people are interested in knowing, "How are we going to sell the helmets? How are we going to sell the costumes?" We're selling this so that we'll have different price points for any buyer and to appeal to many different types of collectors. You can buy everything from a completed costume, all the way down to a kit, and a standard helmet—which is dye injected—to a helmet that's actually the cream of the crop fiberglass with metal, and completely finished inside as a costume. Really, we thought about multiple different levels that we'd like to make accessible to fandom with the point being, we want everyone to share in this and have just as much fun, whether they're going for the highest level collectible to a casual collectible.

You've recently made an original trilogy stormtrooper kit available and it's very accessible in terms of pricing.

DG: The whole point is to bring it in line with the 501st, where it's kind of a rite of passage to build your own. We wanted to acknowledge that. They like to tailor their outfits. If it's prebuilt, sometimes it doesn't fit correctly. It's like buying a suit off the peg. You still have to bring it to the tailor to make it fit properly.

JS: The nice thing is that Dana and I were active 501st members many, many years ago. The reason why he and I got into it was because there's a virtue in building. There's something that comes out of the sense of accomplishment, out of completing a kit. When we saw the response that was so incredibly strong to *The Force Awakens* kit, we wanted to do the same thing and release a kit that was highly accessible. Not only to the 501st, but to maybe inspire people outside of the 501st to get a kit, and then have those people maybe reach out to the 501st and actually help out the program and grow the program that we originally came from ourselves. The price is really set to inspire others who've never considered a kit before.



MORE TO SAY

Visit www.anovos.com to see ANOVOS' full line of amazing *Star Wars* costume wear!

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AN AUDIENCE WITH A PRINCESS!

I had my lifelong dream of meeting Princess Leia come true on January 30, 2015, when Carrie Fisher was a guest at the Salt Lake Comic Con Fan Xperience. I first discovered the magic of *Star Wars* at age five. Almost 30 years later, I anxiously waited in line for over two hours to meet Carrie, but it was well worth the wait. She was very kind to each fan as she greeted everyone alongside her faithful dog, Gary! She sprinkled glitter on my face and later explained in her panel interview that the glitter was a "force field" and that, "Everybody needs to be glittered at some point. It's the law!" — **Norma Jean Gile, by email**

Wow! What an amazing experience! Have any other readers been glittered by Carrie Fisher at a convention? Share your stories with us!

A NEW JEDI!

Star Wars Insider has been a part of my life since the franchise's resurgence in the 1990s, and it has never disappointed! Now my wife and I get to share our love for *Star Wars* with our son, Connor, who—at one month old—joined us at a Halloween Trunk or Treat event in



The Markiewitz family, including their new bundle of (Jedi) joy!

Las Cruces, New Mexico. Even though my stormtrooper armor was a major attraction, the baby was the star of the show! — **Jon Markiewitz, by email**

What a lovely photo! I wonder how long it will be until Connor gets

some stormtrooper armor of his own?

INSPIRED BY THE FORCE

I've been a fan of *Star Wars* for as long as I can remember. I grew up reading the original trilogy storybooks. Learning to read wasn't very easy for me and these *Star Wars* books were among the first things I could read on my own. I now enjoy reading a great deal, especially *Star Wars* books.

I became even more interested in *Star Wars* after *The Phantom Menace* appeared in theaters when I was in elementary school. My friends and I liked to pretend to be Queen Amidala and her handmaidens, Rabé, Sabé, Saché, and Yané.

Over time I have grown to enjoy *Star Wars* even more because of its compelling stories and memorable characters. The multi-faceted, flexible universe that *Star Wars* has created has a bit of something for everyone, from Jedi, Mandalorians, and royalty to "scoundrels." Recently, I had the pleasure of writing an article for *ThurstonTalk.com* about when *Star*



"My family went to our first Celebration this year. For the Ahsoka Lives Day gathering, I wore hand-painted horns and headtails, which I originally made for a Shaak Ti Halloween costume in middle school," says Jenifer Crooks.

Wars came to my hometown of Olympia in 1977. Showing for 24 weeks, it was the most popular movie in Olympia's history up to that time, attracting an enthusiastic audience of all ages. The movie was shown so many times that the projectionist finally had to take a vacation! My father, a young college student at the time, was offered a job counting tickets, which he turned down to his later regret. — **Jenifer Crooks, by email**

Thanks for writing such an inspiring letter, Jenifer. It's always great to see *Star Wars* inspiring such creativity!



Jenifer adds, "*Star Wars* is always a great inspiration for creativity. I sewed Padmé's "Tatooine Blue Dress" for an "Art for Art's Sake" project in high school, modeled by a vintage Crissy doll. All the details are hand-embroidered."

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THE RETURN OF

ASHLEY ECKSTEIN,
THE VOICE OF
AHSOKA TANO, ON
THE RETURN OF THE
CHARACTER TO *STAR
WARS REBELS*,
CELEBRATION
ANAHEIM, AND
PROVIDING FASHION
INSPIRATION FOR
KATHLEEN KENNEDY.

INTERVIEW BY AMY RATCLIFFE

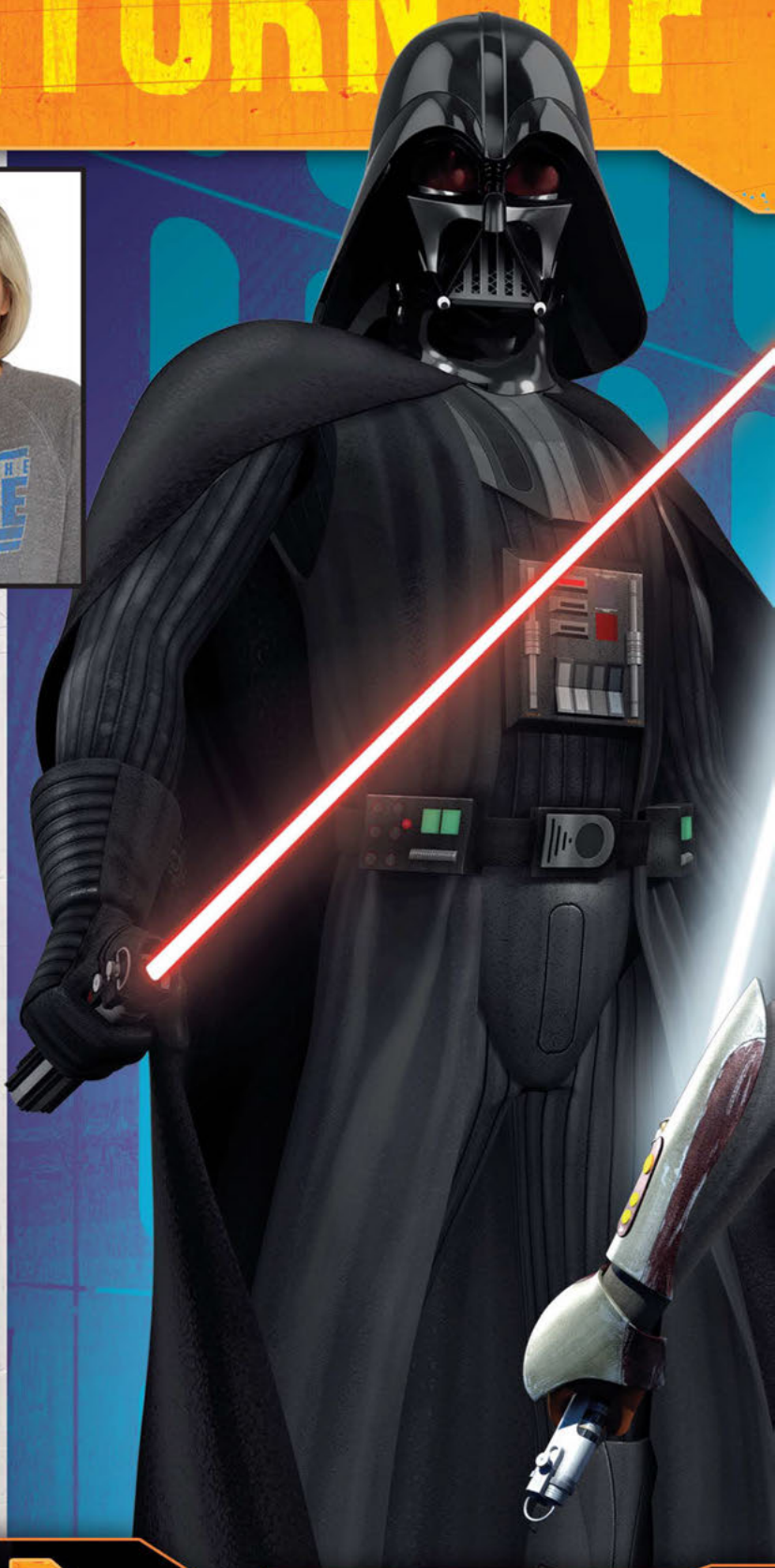


Star Wars Insider: Star Wars Celebration Anaheim opened with *The Force Awakens* panel, and Kathleen Kennedy walked onto the stage wearing Her Universe's lightsaber T-shirt. Did you know that was happening?

Ashley Eckstein: No, I had no idea that Kathleen Kennedy was going to wear our T-shirt [laughs]. It was such an exciting surprise. I did know that she bought it, but I thought that she was wearing it to dinner the night before. So I thought that she had already worn it and the last thing I expected was for her to walk out on stage in our tee. It's like when Kate Middleton wears something and then everyone goes crazy for it. I'm so grateful, and I now call it the Kathleen Kennedy shirt! I feel like she is an icon. Not only is she a fangirl icon, but I feel like she's just an icon for all fans. And if you see Kathleen Kennedy wearing something, naturally in your head you think, *I now have to own a white blazer to pair with that T-shirt because she looks so fantastic.*

Her Universe offered several new items and styles at Celebration. How did the new pin-up dresses go over?

It was great. The fans were incredibly supportive and luckily we had a dressing room at the show. We had long lines, but everyone was patient. This was our first foray into a lot more fashion-forward designs, so we learned a lot and definitely got everyone's feedback—good and bad—and we're going to be improving on that. It was a really exciting con; the lightsaber skirt and cardigans were the most popular items.



ASHLEY ECKSTEIN IS AHSOKA TANO

AHSOKA TANO



From left to right: Ashley Eckstein; Ahsoka emerges from her Master's shadow; the beginning: Ahsoka's debut appearance in the *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* movie (2008)

"I SAW THE *REBELS* PREMIERE EPISODE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A ROOM WITH A COUPLE OF THOUSAND PEOPLE!"

What are some of the top highlights of the rest of your Celebration experience?

The *Star Wars Rebels* panel with everyone—especially the surprise appearance of Dee [Bradley Baker] and I on stage and everyone finding out that Captain Rex was coming back. Dee and I were standing backstage when Rex appeared on the trailer and just hearing the crowd roar at that moment was so exciting. It was so electric, and then to walk out on stage together with him was incredible.

And then there was the *Rebels* premiere. That was the first time I'd seen the episode and to watch it with a couple thousand people in the room for the first time was really just surreal.

The third highlight was the Ahsoka Lives Day. It was so special to see how the

fans still love Ahsoka and support her, and to see all the little girls dressed as Ahsoka just melted my heart. Honestly, I got goose bumps at the turnout.

How hard was it for you to keep the return of Ahsoka under your hat?

It was a hard secret to keep. I've known the secret for about a year now, and it's just been so tough because I haven't lied to the fans, but I can't tell the truth so what do you really say? When friends would ask me over and over again, "Is Ahsoka going to be in *Rebels*? Are we going to see Ahsoka again?" I would just have to say, "Well, you know, she's still alive. It's kind of too soon to tell. You know, they're still writing *Rebels*. Who knows? Maybe we'll see her one day."

But once Fulcrum came into the storyline, it was harder to be vague. The fans—who are so fantastic—pitched up Fulcrum's voice and said, "Okay, that sounds like Ashley and the way that she speaks!" I pretty much went into hiding after that because I didn't know what to say. I kind of avoided interviews, all podcasts, really all social media about the subject, until after the finale aired because I didn't know what to say about it, and I didn't want to lie about it.

She's not the only character from *Clone Wars* jumping to *Rebels*. The Season Two trailer that premiered at Celebration showed Captain Rex and Hondo Ohnaka. What does it mean to you to see these characters continue to live in *Rebels*?

I'm also a huge fan of these characters in *Star Wars* and so, as a fan, I became so invested in them. We spent six seasons on *The Clone Wars* getting to know these characters so deeply—we really did. They're animated characters, but we became emotionally attached to them. I can't say enough about Captain Rex and what he means, but also Hondo is a personal favorite of mine. So for





**“FOR *THE CLONE WARS* TO
END LIKE IT DID MEANS SO
MUCH MORE FOR AHSOKA
AND REX TO COME BACK.”**

The Clone Wars to end like it did, kind of on a cliffhanger and not knowing where these characters ended up, it means so much for them to come back in *Rebels* because we need more. We need more of their storylines, we need to know where they went and what they’ve been doing, what happened to them.



Rex and Ahsoka have quite a history. What kind of relationship do they have now?

They have a bond like family. They really spent so much time side-by-side fighting in *Clone Wars*. I think Ahsoka has such a special bond with Rex because he was kind of like a mentor in a way, along with Anakin—even though she said in the show, “So, if you are a captain and I’m a Jedi, then technically I outrank you, right?” Rex quickly put her in her place and said, “Well, experience outranks everything,” and I think she respected him from day one for that and admired that she had to earn his respect. I think along with Anakin and the rest of the gang, it’s like an older brother and a family member. So they have a really, really tight bond and we don’t know what happened between them after she walked away from the Clone Wars, but we do know that they’re both still alive, and hopefully we’ll get to find out more about what they’ve been doing since.



**Opposite page,
from left:** Ezra and
Ahsoka make battle
plans; the return of
the (former) Jedi!

**This page, left from
the top:** The iconic
moment “Fulcrum’s”
identity was finally
revealed to the
Ghost crew!

Left: Ashley models
a handy Wicket bag!

This page, right, from top: Hera and Ahsoka; Ashley models the T-shirt as worn by Kathleen Kennedy at Celebration Anaheim; Ahsoka in action on the bridge of the *Ghost*.

Opposite page, left to right: Ahsoka's experiences have made her a much tougher Togruta! Bonding with Chopper!

Both Rex and Ahsoka were close with Anakin Skywalker, and Darth Vader is in the picture on *Rebels* along with them. Is Ahsoka aware of Darth Vader as a presence in the galaxy?

Darth Vader is a newer presence to the rebels. And, what else can I say to that? [laughs] I can't say much about Ahsoka and Vader and what she knows and what she doesn't know. But I do know that once Dave Filoni told me that if Ahsoka and Darth Vader were to eventually confront each other, that it probably wouldn't be a good thing for Ahsoka. Dave said on the *Rebels* panel that, obviously, it's a natural progression for her story. *If* that does happen—and I can honestly answer you with *if* because I don't know that part of her story—I fear for her because of that looming advice Dave Filoni once gave me.

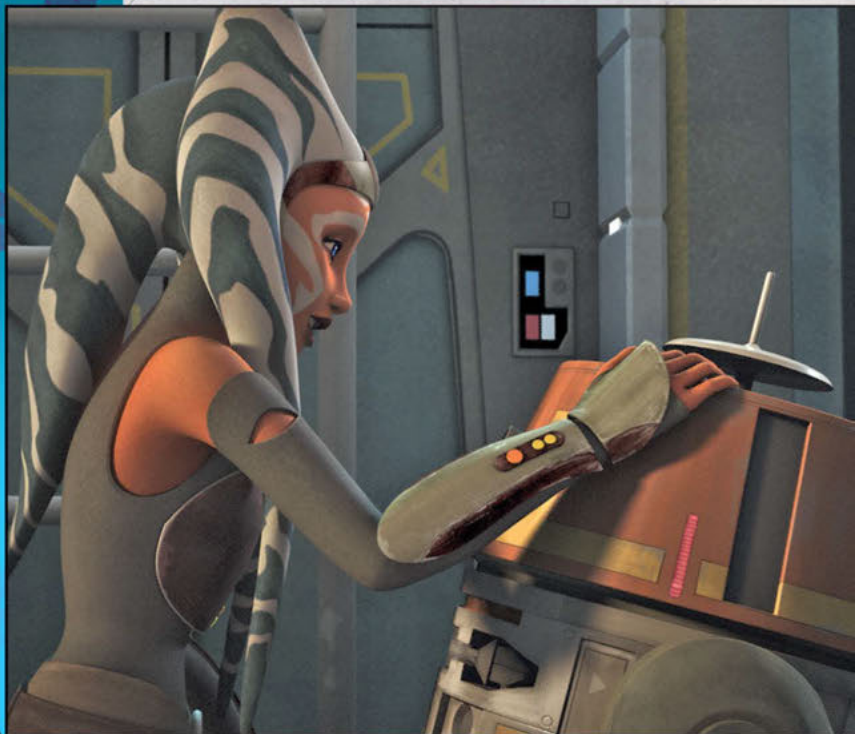
If Vader is aware of who Ahsoka is, he probably wouldn't like having such a strong reminder of the person he used to be around.

Absolutely. He is the *most* powerful, and as powerful as I think Ahsoka is—and of course I am biased—it's still Darth Vader [laughs]. I don't know how well she would fair. So we'll see.

We know Ahsoka is helping the rebels fight back against the Empire. Will we learn more about her specific role within the budding rebellion?

Ahsoka will continue to remain a mysterious character. She's a recurring character so she's not going to be a main character in every single episode. And Ahsoka has questions that she needs answered, so we'll see her, but then she's also going to be on her own journey getting her questions answered.





**"I THINK KANAN AND EZRA
HAVE A BOND THAT IS LIKE
AHSOKA AND ANAKIN'S, IN
THAT IT IS UNBREAKABLE."**

We saw Ahsoka walk away from the Jedi lifestyle, but she likely received more training than Kanan. Will we see Ezra wanting to learn from her?

I think Kanan and Ezra have a bond that is like Ahsoka and Anakin's in that it is unbreakable, and that can't be replaced by Ahsoka. I think how I would almost describe it is how Ahsoka was with Obi-Wan. Ahsoka and Anakin were really close, but Obi-Wan was this wise adviser that Ahsoka almost covered to a little bit, because there was so much respect—like he was the master to the master, if that makes sense. There was like an extra level of respect there; she was always on her best behavior around Obi-Wan. She always watched her manners and Ps and Qs, and she wasn't too snippy with Obi-Wan. I almost think Ahsoka will be viewed by Ezra with a sense of reverence of, "She is this master to the master,"

This page, from top: Ahsoka is reminded of her own journey when she meets Kanan and Ezra; a thoughtful Ahsoka; the return of Ahsoka—and the rebels—in the explosive Season Two opener!

Opposite page, from left: A strong, determined Ahsoka faces an uncertain future; Ashley proudly wears her “Ahsoka Lives!” T-shirt.

“THERE ARE SO MANY LESSONS I’VE LEARNED FROM AHSOKA. I OFTEN THINK, *WHAT WOULD AHSOKA DO?*”

essentially. Ahsoka’s not that, but I’m just saying, Ezra has more of a friendly relationship with Kanan with the banter and the wisecracks.

She is the mentor now, and, in some ways, so are you with the *Rebels* cast. What has it been like to be a veteran in both areas?

It’s so funny because I just experienced that at Celebration. This was the first Celebration for the whole cast of *Rebels*. And so backstage I was giving them advice like, “Okay, here’s what’s going to happen, and here’s what we are going to do and here is what to expect!” They all had several questions. Right before they walked out on stage for the panel, they were like, “Oh my gosh, we can’t believe all the fans out there,” and they were nervous. It’s definitely like life imitates art. I felt like Ahsoka—I was able to provide advice because this was my fourth Celebration.





Ahsoka has come such a long way from the character we first met in 2008. Have you learned any lessons from her?

There are so many lessons that I've learned from Ahsoka. Sometimes it feels silly to say that this animated character has taught us so much, but she really has. I look up to her. I often think, *What would Ahsoka do?* I feel like she has such a good heart and such a good moral compass that she'll always choose what's right, and I often keep that in mind. But I think with Ahsoka in *Rebels*—she's now back with a sense of confidence. It's almost like when we go to school for so many years and then when we graduate, we're out in the real world. It's like Ahsoka is now out in the real world, and we now see her in her job and she is very confident in it. I think that's what we can take from her right now in *Rebels*: Just be confident in what you're doing and go forward with the story. 🌟

MORE TO SAY

For a chance to win Ashley's fashions in this article write in to the address on page 3 by September 8. We also have a Her Universe E-Gift Card worth \$50!

Use the subject heading "Ahsoka Lives!"

Visit Her Universe at www.heruniverse.com

HAVE YOU?



Photo of Vanessa Marshall courtesy of Cherie Roberts

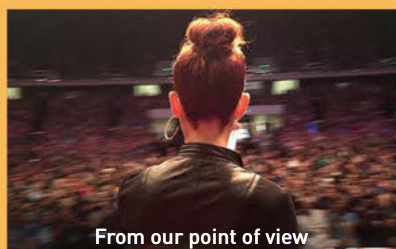
VANESSA'S VIEW

HEY, *STAR WARS* FANS! *STAR WARS* CELEBRATION 2015 WAS INTERGALACTIC. THERE WAS SO MUCH GOING ON, THIS ISSUE I'M BRINGING YOU AN EXCLUSIVE BEHIND-THE-SCENES REPORT!

DAY 1

On Saturday, we kicked the day off with the *Star Wars Rebels* panel!

Hosted by James Arnold Taylor, the *Rebels* panel included Dave Filoni, Simon Kinberg, Freddie Prinze, Jr., Vanessa Marshall, Steve Blum, Tiya Sircar, and Taylor Gray—with surprise guests Ashley Eckstein and Dee Bradley Baker.



From our point of view



Dave Filoni delighted us with a sneak peek of season two (the actors actually watched it kneeling down on the floor).



When it was over, we weren't sure if we could stand up—especially after seeing Rex and Hondo! Steve Blum pretended to administer CPR! Much needed, as we all were blown away!



On our way to the *Rebels* season two premiere, we ran into some friends (Hera and Zeb)!



We made quite a team on the red carpet. Even Chopper looked pretty good! We all enjoyed the screening. It was the perfect way to end such a magical day!



Afterward, we attended a press conference, split up for individual interviews, and some of us even got to play with an Imperial trooper helmet!

DAY 2

On Sunday, we returned for an OfficialPix autograph signing. It was fun to meet so many cool fans! They seemed to truly enjoy our work, which was both gratifying and inspiring. *Star Wars* fans are the best!



My voice-over agent, Pat Brady, got me situated for the day! Bless her!



The fans waited many hours in a very long line. We appreciated their patience!

The day was full of surprises.... First, Darth Makenna stopped by!



Next, the Southern California Garrison of the 501st Legion arrived to make me an honorary member! Kevin Weir, my dear friend, inducted me, and I was in complete shock. I lost it completely!



With Michael Bender, Dave Filoni, Stacey Bender, and Kevin Weir.

It meant the world to me that Dave Filoni was there. I was also thrilled to share this moment with my Fangirl Bestie, Teresa Delgado, and her *Star Wars* Bookworms podcast co-host, Aaron Goins (in the background).

As we were finishing up, the Rebel Legion paid us a visit with more good news! We were all made honorary members right then and there! The day just kept getting better and better!



Aaron Goins, Teresa Delgado, Dave Filoni, and myself.

I was also able to "meet up" with my *Star Wars* in the Classroom buddies! I got to see Dan Zher, Cory Clubb, and fellow Special Ops Member, John Morton!



I am deeply grateful for yet another rewarding *Star Wars* experience. I will be "celebrating" all year long! Until next time! May the Force be with you!



Star Wars in the Classroom: Thomas Riddle, Danielle Lopez, Emily Morton, and myself.

MORE TO SAY

Follow Vanessa on Twitter: @vanmarshall

HAVE YOU?



A CERTAIN
POINT OF VIEW



**NOT COMING SOON
TO A THEATER NEAR YOU!**

THE *STAR WARS* STANDALONE MOVIES WE'LL PROBABLY NEVER SEE!

BY MICHAEL PRICE

With Lucasfilm's announcement of at least three new stand-alone *Star Wars* movies on the way, speculation among fans has been rampant as to what these new movies will be about and which major *Star Wars* characters they will feature. Yoda? Boba Fett? Young Han and Chewie? Obi-Wan Kenobi, the lost years? But, of course, there's so much more to the *Star Wars* universe than the so-called "major" characters; and now that most of the continuity has been erased by the keepers of the canon, there's room to focus a spin-off movie or two on some of the lesser-known characters. Why not give them each their own summer blockbuster movie to shine? Here are a few modest proposals for future films....



TATOOINE NIGHTS

DIRECTOR

HE WAS FAST, FURIOUS... AND HE BLOWED UP REAL GOOD!

Ben Quadinaros's fiasco at the Boonta Eve Podrace was a throwaway joke in *The Phantom Menace*, but it becomes the basis for an action-packed hot-rod adventure in this spin-off movie directed by *Furious 7*'s James Wan and starring Vin Diesel as the ill-starred Ben Q. With his team assembled, Ben wins a slew of preliminary races, falls in love with Watto's spitfire daughter, Wendy, finally wins pole position at the big race... and then his pod blows up at the starting line.



SIMPLY THE BAST

**"We've analyzed their attack, sir, and there is a danger. Should I have your ship standing by?"
...MILD WORDS, DELIVERED TOO LATE!**

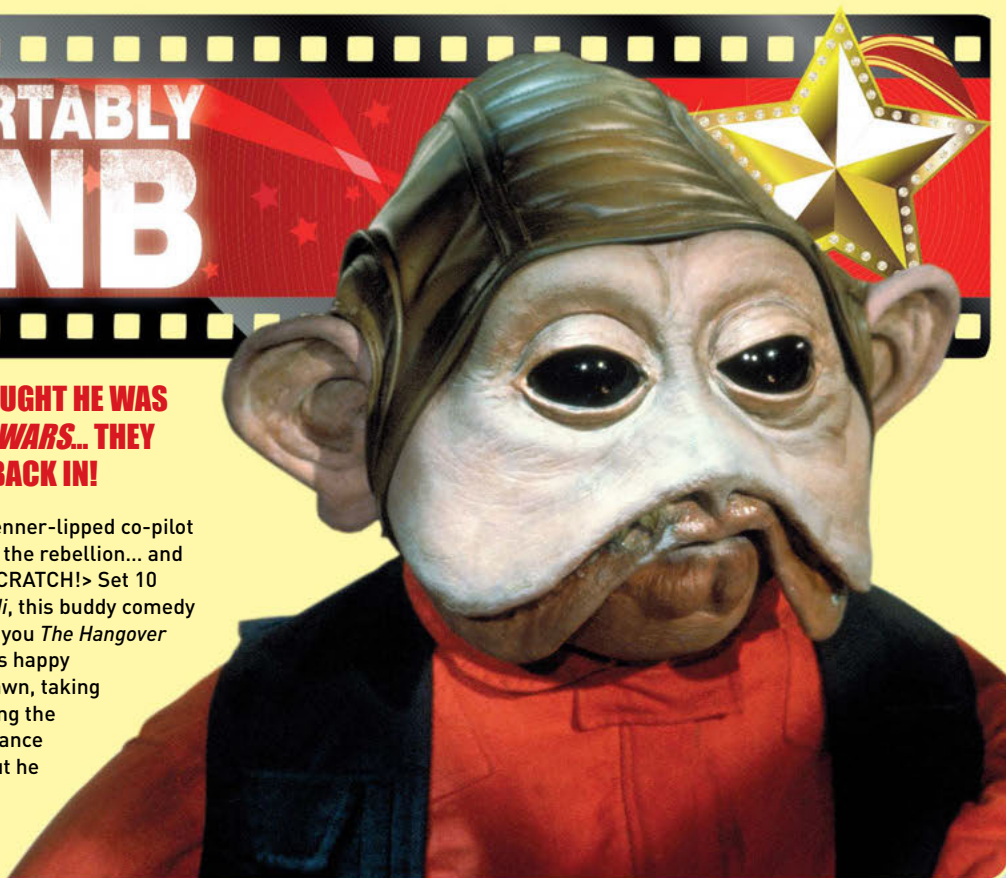
Neither spin-off, prequel nor sequel, *Simply the Bast* is a "same-quel." It takes place at the exact same time as *A New Hope*. Our hero: Stylishly sideburned Imperial General Moradmin Bast. He's a good soldier, but he's got a sixth sense, a nagging intuition, some would call it, "a bad feeling about this." The "this" he's got a bad feeling about? The Death Star.

Bast spends the film on a detective story-style quest to make sure the battle station is, as advertised by his old Academy roommate Admiral Motti, "the ultimate power in the universe." Bast sneaks *Mission Impossible*-style into Darth Vader's cubicle of solitude and steals a set of Death Star plans. Studying the plans, he finally discovers the truth—"There *is* a danger." He marches up to Tarkin, tells him the bad news... and gets shot down by his boss two minutes before the Death Star is blown to bits.

COMFORTABLY NUNB

**JUST WHEN HE THOUGHT HE WAS
DONE WITH *STAR WARS*... THEY
PULLED HIM BACK IN!**

Meet Nien Nunb, Kendall Jenner-lipped co-pilot to Lando Calrissian, hero of the rebellion... and suburban Dad? <NEEDLE SCRATCH!> Set 10 years after *Return of the Jedi*, this buddy comedy from the team who brought you *The Hangover* finds Nien Nunb enjoying his happy retirement of mowing the lawn, taking the kids to school and making the occasional personal appearance at *Star Wars* Celebration. But he knows that something's not right. He misses "the life."



**WHEN PEOPLE SAY DREAMS DON'T COME TRUE,
TELL THEM ABOUT PORKINS**

It's the inspiring sports-movie tale of the big rebel that could. Jek Porkins is a young dreamer with big dreams and a bigger waistline, who is blackballed from the Academy because he couldn't fit through the hatch of an AT-AT. Porkins joins the Rebellion, where he becomes the plucky equipment manager and water boy for the A-Team of Wedge, Biggs, and Puck Naeco. Porkins endears himself to the guys with his grit and optimism, until, on the eve of the Battle of Yavin, Wedge, Biggs, Puck, and the rest of Red Squadron, go to Red Leader's office, and, in a stirring display of loyalty, toss their orange flight suits on Red Leader's desk and demand that Porkins be allowed to join them on the Death Star raid...





that song you do!



**A LONG TIME AGO IN A CANTINA FAR,
FAR AWAY....**



Figrin D'an: A young Bith with a dream and a Kloo Horn, his career and life are going nowhere until—like Lennon meeting McCartney—he crosses paths with another young musical firebrand, Max Rebo. Together, they form the nucleus of one of the most popular bands in the entire Outer Rim—the

Modal Nodes. See how they audition every Jizz-playing Bith in Mos Eisley, Mos Espa, Mos Def, Mos Tavern, and every Mos inbetween as they build a killer band. Eventually, they break up when Max's girlfriend, conceptual artist Sy Snootles, comes between them. With his best friend and his

creative mojo gone, Figrin D'an stays in the Cantina, hiring a bunch of flunkies and playing the only song that ever mattered to him over and over, while Max and Sy find wealth, happiness, a steady gig, and ultimately their demise in the court of Jabba the Hutt.

Sith-teen Candles

MEET THE EMPEROR... OF AWKWARDNESS!

Judd Apatow directs this coming-of-age comedy about the excruciatingly embarrassing *Freaks And Geeks*-style High School years of Palpatine, the gawky nerd who would become Darth Sidious. Christopher "McLovin" Mintz-Plasse plays the young geek, and Jonah Hill is his best buddy Mas Amedda. At Naboo High, the two nerds try their best to fit in and not make waves, but they are humiliated on prom night (prom theme: "Enchantment Under The Paonga Sea") when Palpatine rips his best pants on Mas Amedda's horns. Palpatine is mercilessly mocked by popular jock Sio Bibble (Bradley Cooper), and his cheerleader date Mon Mothma (Isla Fisher).



reservoir doctor

HE HAD A NOSE... FOR TROUBLE

Quentin Tarantino directs this multi-part spin-off following the murderous exploits of Dr. Cornelius Evazan—the ugliest man in Mos Eisley. In true Tarantino style, each of the 12 films tells the tale of how Evazan (Christoph Waltz), along with his sidekick Ponda Baba (John Travolta) receives a death sentence in a different system... though not in chronological order.



BOMBAD LIEUTENANT

HE-SA THINK PEOPLE GONNA DIE...

He's been mocked... he's been jeered... he's been voted, "the most annoying character in the history of film"... and he's not going to take it anymore. Ahmed Best returns with a vengeance as Jar Jar Binks: Gungan with a gun, in this dark, violent, yet still somehow PG rated spin-off movie from director Abel Ferrara. After making the critical mistake of Googling himself, Jar Jar realizes the crushing futility of his existence and throws himself headlong into a spiral of vice and crime. He gets addicted to "tongue-numbing"—sticking his mouth in between turbine engines just for the plasma energy jolt that takes his pain away. He joins the Naboo Police and lets his basest impulses loose, picking fights and shooting at perps without even so much as an, "exsqueeze me." In the ultimate abuse of his badge, the Bombad Lieutenant goes on a rampage through downtown Theed, meting out angry justice to anyone who dares laugh at him... which turns out to be everyone.





A FEW GOOD GAMORREANS

JABBA DON'T WANT NO SCRUBS

Michael Mann writes and directs this *Dirty Dozen*-style military action-adventure following the legendary formation of the Gamorrean dream team of Gartogg, Jubnuk, Rogua, and Ortugg, from their days in the Gamorrean Military Academy (or West Pork) to their string of adventures protecting Jabba the Hutt. In their final test before taking their place at Jabba's Palace, the Teenage Mutant Ninja Porkers do battle with their arch-enemies the Ugnaughts—declaring war on them for the sole reason that people often mistake them for one another.

WUHER & THE GONK

FIGHTING CRIME ONE SCUM HIVE AT A TIME

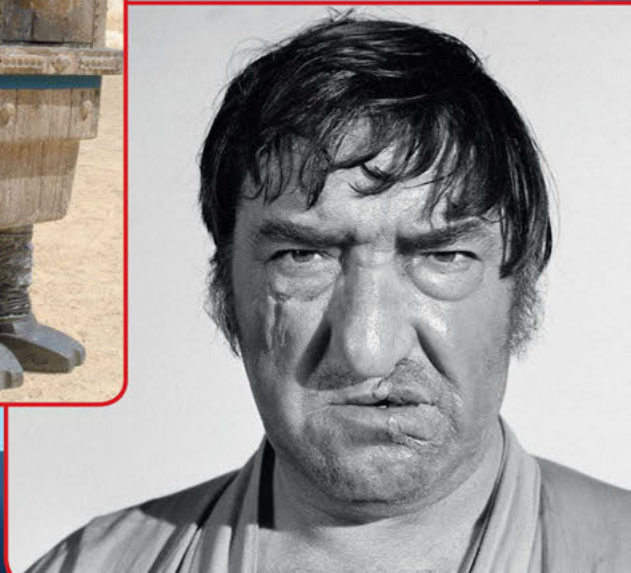
Starsky and Hutch, Crockett and Tubbs, Tango and Cash. Add to this list of the greatest buddy-cop-duos the one and only Wuher (Chris Pratt) and the garbage-can-sized droid known only as "The Gonk" (Benicio Del Toro). Years before *A New Hope*, the unlikely pair of rookie cops are thrown together by former bounty hunter-turned-Coruscant Chief of Detectives Cad Bane (Paul Giamatti). The gruff bartender-to-be and the laconic droid-with-just-legs become fast friends as they run roughshod over Coruscant's criminal element, trying to bust an inter-terrestrial Death Sticks ring. In a thrilling action climax set in the ruins of the Jedi Temple, Gonk (who is one day away from refurbishment) takes a blaster bolt meant for Wuher. Devastated over the loss of his partner and best friend, Wuher quits the force and takes a bartending job light years away from his old beat. At Chalmun's, Wuher institutes a strict "no droids" policy... not out of hate, but out of a broken heart.



MORE TO SAY

Michael Price is an Emmy Award-Winning writer on *The Simpsons*. He has also written the LEGO *Star Wars* Specials.

HAVE YOU?





MY STAR WARS

AS FAN FAVORITE CAPTAIN REX MAKES THE LEAP FROM *STAR WARS: THE CLONE WARS* TO *STAR WARS REBELS*, THE MAN BEHIND HIS VOICE, **DEE BRADLEY BAKER**, REVEALS ALL ABOUT LIFE AS A FAN! INTERVIEW BY MARK NEWBOLD

What was your reaction to seeing *Star Wars* for the first time?

It's hard to adequately describe how exciting *Star Wars* was when it was first released. I was beyond excited. I had already read the novelization and the *Time* magazine feature. I was beyond pumped! Everyone seemed to go nuts over *Star Wars* in a way that was unprecedented at the time.

What do you love about being a part of the *Star Wars* story?

It is incredibly fun and exciting to be a part of the mythology of *Star Wars* and to experience fans' excitement directly. The best part is seeing a kid light up when they recognize my Captain Rex voice. I also admire the craft and passion of those who build their costumes, especially the 501st!

When did you first become aware of *Star Wars* fandom?

I wasn't involved with SW fandom until *The Clone Wars* got going. Before then, I was on my own. Our cast's first fan convention was in Dallas, Texas (I think) and it was overwhelming to see how many were involved in loving this incredible world George Lucas and his friends created that I was now a part of, too!

Do you have a favorite scene?

I was always particularly fascinated with the Cantina and when Han Solo met Greedo, who began speaking an alien language with subtitles. That blew my mind! Also, now that I'm a dad, I find Vader's final moments and his sacrifice moving in a way I never did when I was younger.

Can you reveal something that will surprise *Star Wars* fans?

Everyone in the cast of the Season Five finale of *Clone Wars* was in the dark as to the ending of that episode, except for Ashley (Ahsoka) and Matt (Anakin). The final script page was blank and we were asked to leave the studio when it was recorded! It reminded me of the level of secrecy that surrounded *The Empire Strikes Back*! I didn't know what was going to happen when it aired and loved that surprise!

Where did you sign your first *Star Wars* autograph?

Probably at the first Dallas convention that we *Clone Wars* cast members attended. Matt Lanter (Anakin) started getting swamped by girls who recognized him from a television series he had just done. He had to sneak into the hotel through the back door! The rest of us

voice actors were quite safe to use the front entrance.

What is the best gift that being involved with *Star Wars* has given you?

It's so wonderful to connect into something you loved as a kid—that inspired you and set an example of what creative people can create together. To help make that and tap into a global community of fans is an awesome feeling. Seeing *Star Wars* thrive to a degree I'd never have imagined in movies—*The Clone Wars*, the new *Rebels* series, as well as the upcoming feature—makes the little boy inside me so excited I can hardly stand it!

What is your favorite *Star Wars* film and why?

I love watching them all (preferred sequence: IV, V, I, II, III, then VI!). I'm going to have to go with *The Empire Strikes Back*. From the opening overhead shot of Phil Tippet's taunt to the Imperial walkers battle scene to the finale's exciting revelation, it was a huge thrill to experience it with fresh eyes, not knowing what to expect. I hope to avoid as much press about *The Force Awakens* as possible so I can be surprised again later this year! 🌟



AN ALL-NEW TALE



KINDRED SPIRITS



A PREQUEL TO *DARK DISCIPLE* BY CHRISTIE GOLDEN, WITH ART BY MAGALI VILLENEUVE

This enterprise is doomed to failure," Asajj Ventress muttered. Her hands were securely bound behind her, and she was sweltering beneath the blazing Florrum sun in a long dark robe and heavy cloak.

"Only if you blow it," Lassa Rhayme whispered back.

The blue-skinned Pantoran wore Ventress's clothes: black boots with blue protective shin plating, leggings, and a black, high-collared shirt beneath a tunic. There was more plating on the left shoulder and across the hips, and plenty of places to fasten a variety of gear. The pirate captain looked born to it.

Ventress had no intention of "blowing it," but she was definitely having second thoughts about this scheme.

Taking the bounty had seemed like a good idea at the time. The job had appeared on the roster with an impressive number of credits attached to it, and Ventress had recently laid out a sizeable amount for repairs to the *Banshee*.

Seeking half-dozen skilled fighter pilots to serve as escort for the cargo ship Steady On. No questions asked. Half payment upon agreement, half upon safe delivery of Steady On's cargo.

"Smugglers plus cargo equals pirates" was an equation Ventress had learned long ago, so the attack on the *Steady On* was not unexpected. What was unexpected was getting rescued by a second group of pirates, the Blood Bone Order, who had also intended to plunder the freighter.

"We've been planning this for weeks," Lassa Rhayme had told her. "You can imagine my surprise when, upon the *Opportunity's* arrival at the proper coordinates, the only ships we saw were fighters floating dead in space."

Ventress had been the only survivor. Rhayme had brought the wounded woman to the ship's sickbay and healed her injuries. She had also towed the *Banshee* in for repairs.

"Why?" Ventress had asked, curious.

"When your ship was in such bad shape and you were still alive, I had a hunch. It paid off. We found this." Rhayme had reached behind her back, withdrew Ventress's lightsaber, and tossed it to her.

"I can use your help recovering the *Steady On*."

Ventress welcomed the familiar weight of the weapon in her hand. She had expected to miss her twin red lightsabers, but was glad now that they had been stolen. The old ones reminded her too much of Dooku, and she found she preferred the yellow light of this one. "I might be willing to help you—provided I get to keep a certain piece of cargo."

"What might that be?"

"That might be my business," Ventress had replied.

Rhayme's golden eyes had narrowed as she speculatively regarded the woman she'd rescued. "One item?"

"One item."

She nodded. "Help me get the freighter back, and whatever it is, it's yours."

Rhayme had sent a crew member to go undercover on the *Steady On*. He had reported back that Hondo Ohnaka, the pirate responsible for the theft, was currently not on the Florrum base; only a skeleton crew led by an underling was unloading the *Steady On*. "It's a break for us—Hondo's sharp, and a nasty piece of work, even for a Weequay."

Weequay.

"Now, you have my attention," Ventress said. "I am... not fond of Weequays."

It was an understatement. Ventress despised the species, with their leathery, wrinkled skin and sour dispositions. Weequay

raiders had murdered both her slave master and, later, Ky Narec, the Jedi who had taken her on as his Padawan. Her hand had tightened on her lightsaber in anticipation.

"Don't get too free with that," Rhayme warned, nodding at the weapon. "I'm not fond of high body counts. We kill when needed, not for sport."

"You sound like a Jedi," Ventress had said scornfully.

"Don't insult me."

Jiro, the pirate put in charge in Hondo's absence, had been intrigued by Lassa's proposition when contacted via hologram, and permitted them to land in the flat, rocky depression in front of Hondo's complex. The area was cluttered with debris. Somebody had ferreted out this hideaway not too long ago, and it was definitely the worse for wear. Ventress had spotted the *Steady On*—noteworthy for being completely intact amid the rubble—being unloaded as they were "escorted" inside what remained of a large, multi-level complex at blasterpoint.

"I'm beginning to think this wasn't such a good idea," Ventress continued as they walked through a triangular door and passed from sunlight into gloom.

"Hey there, no talking!" One of the pirates shoved a blaster into Ventress's midsection. She gritted her teeth to keep from Force-hurling the disgusting creature the length of the enormous and poorly named "grand hall."

A few of the pirates were engaged in activities such as drinking, flirting with the female members of the crew, fighting about flirting, betting on fighting, and the fine art of sliding off a chair completely smashed. But there were others, their cold gazes crawling over the newcomers, who speared food with knives as if they were simply practicing carving up flesh. Jiro awaited Ventress and Rhayme at the far end. Seated at a long table on a raised dais, he sprawled comfortably in an ornate chair that commanded the best view.

He was one of the ugliest Weequays Ventress had ever seen, with a row of single locks of hair standing up in spikes on his overlarge head and two longer braids trailing down his back. The pirate who had brought in the two women handed him Ventress's lightsaber. Jiro looked at it carefully, then at Ventress, and finally at Rhayme.

"You must be someone special, to catch a Jedi. How'd you manage it?"

"The magnificent Captain Rhayme," and Lassa spat on the ground, "sends her crew off to scout for news of ships to plunder. That's how I came across her." She gave Ventress a scornful look. "I found her pretty badly injured, from what or whom I don't know, but still alive. I took her back to my ship, healed her up—enough to walk, at least—and contacted you."

Ventress gave Lassa a look that she hoped was both defiant and exhausted. Jiro leaned back in his chair, plunking filthy boots on the table. At the next table over, someone belched.

"I've heard of Lassa Rhayme. Sounds like she's not your best pal."

"Hardly," Rhayme said, with just the proper amount of loathing, her lip curling slightly. *She's good*, Ventress thought. "That witch is brutal. We boarded a Separatist ship once, and she stole its torture droid. Rhayme'd always been harsh to her crew, but now..." the "bounty hunter" shook her lavender head. "I'd do anything to get out from under her thumb."

"Like deserting your captain to join Hondo's Gang, eh? How could we trust a turncoat?"

VENTRESS HAD EXPECTED TO MISS HER TWIN RED LIGHTSABERS, BUT WAS GLAD NOW THAT THEY HAD BEEN STOLEN. THE OLD ONES REMINDED HER OF DOOKU, AND SHE FOUND SHE PREFERRED THE YELLOW LIGHT OF THIS ONE.

Rhyme smiled sweetly. "Hondo gave *you* a second chance when you turned on him, didn't he?" Ventress stifled a smile as Jiro's face darkened at the reminder. She and Lassa had done their homework. Rhyme folded her arms.

"Look—I've got everything to lose and nothing to gain by lying. I'm giving you a *Jedi*. The ransom the Order will pay for her safe return will be staggering. Plus..." She placed her hands on the table and brought her face close to his. "I'll tell you everything you need to know about Lassa Rhyme's plans. Hondo will come back to find that in his absence, *you* have defeated a dangerous pirate captain, captured her ship, have a new loyal crewmember, and a Jedi prisoner in the bargain. He just might make you second in command."

Jiro considered this, removing his boots from the table and leaning forward. "Still, why not keep the Jedi yourself and collect the bounty?"

Ventress's patience had worn out. The more the Weequay grilled them, the more likely he was to simply order both her and Rhyme shot and claim all the glory himself. *Time to shake things up a bit.*

The lightsaber sailed from Jiro's hands into Ventress's just as she spun around to catch it. She could not use it to cut her bonds with her hands bound behind her, but she could fight. With a yell, she sprang over Rhyme, turning in mid-air and angling the lightsaber so precisely it singed Rhyme's lavender braid.

"What—" cried Jiro, then dove for cover under the table.

Rhyme gasped and stared at Ventress. Her brilliant gold eyes narrowed and she lunged for the nearest blaster, which happened to belong to the pirate who had brought them in. Ventress was therefore not displeased when Lassa used him as a shield while firing at the "Jedi."

The shots barely missed Ventress. Rhyme looked furious. Her color was up and her white teeth were bared in a grimace of pure hatred.

Oh, no. She thinks I've turned on her.

It was a perfectly reasonable assumption. There had been a time, not long ago, when it would have been the correct one. But not today. Ventress would have to hope that Lassa Rhyme would understand what she was doing—and that Jiro wouldn't.

With her back to Rhyme, Ventress used the Force to sense the bolts coming and bat them away. She heard a yelp behind her, but it was decidedly not feminine. Good. She jumped onto the table, whirling in a circle down its length and catching any stray arms or torsos unfortunate enough to be in her lightsaber's blazing yellow path.

"Stand down, Jedi!" came Lassa's clear, strong voice.

Has she caught on yet? One way or another, either to continue the plan or end it, Rhyme would have to stop Ventress. Two Weequays charged the table, raising their blasters. Ventress leaped to meet them, kicking out with both feet. The toe of each boot caught a startled pirate under the chin. Their heads snapped back and they crumpled, either unconscious or dead.

As she landed, a powerful kick in the small of her back sent her sprawling. Her lightsaber was snatched from her hands and a second later, pain blossomed in her wrists. Lassa Rhyme, pirate captain, planted a boot on her back—Ventress shifted her head to one side and looked up, still uncertain as to whether Rhyme was friend or foe. Rhyme brought the humming tip of the lightsaber so close to Ventress's face that she was forced to squint against its brightness.

She struggled for breath, and finally gasped, "I... yield."

"I didn't believe you were really able to capture her," Jiro said, somewhat grudgingly, as the "defeated Jedi" was led away. "I am... impressed."

Rhyme's shoulder ached, and she would have several bruises shortly, but she'd had worse. "No question, Jedi are tough to defeat. I'm lucky she's not at her best."



She casually fastened the lightsaber to her belt, as if there was no question that it belonged to her. Jiro noticed the gesture, but let it go, doubtless reasoning that the amount the Gang would receive from the Jedi Council would more than compensate him for a lost lightsaber.

"So I take it we're agreed?" Rhyme continued. "You get the bounty on the Jedi and accept me as a crewmember, and I tell you where to find Lassa Rhyme's fleet."

"Well," Jiro hedged, "It's Hondo who has to make the final decision."

She took a seat without being invited, and again, Jiro did not object. "I'm not surprised. It's his gang, after all. I'll wait. When is he expected back?"

That threw Jiro. "He didn't say. But I could put in a few good words for you if you were to tell *me* where to find this fleet. So I could, ah, prep the ships and get them all ready-like."

So you could send off your men now and take all the credit-like, Rhyme thought, amused. *And likely try to kill me in the bargain.* Rhyme pretended not to have come to this obvious conclusion.

"That's a great idea!" she said. Jiro visibly relaxed. "Now... let me start by telling you how many ships Rhyme commands, what kind, and their names." She smiled. "I think a drink might loosen my tongue... if you'll join me."

Jiro gave her a lascivious look, reached for a no-doubt filthy mug, and sloshed a bright green liquid into it.

The lightsaber burns on Ventress's wrists were exquisitely painful, but she didn't care. In taking Ventress down, Lassa had



**RHAYME WAVED
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sufficiently damaged the stun cuffs so Ventress could break free—and that meant Lassa believed her. She could take a little pain.

Once the doors to the grand hall closed behind her and her escorts, Ventress wasted no time. She used the Force to shatter the remains of the binders and extended her hands, palms up, to each side. Two of the pirates slammed hard into the walls. She whirled on the third, who came at her with a fist raised and rotting teeth bared, and punched him in the throat. The fourth grabbed her arm. She twisted, using her momentum and the Force to hurl him over her head, landing a blow to his jaw on his descent.

They all looked to be alive, but out cold. Better safe than sorry, though. Ventress relieved the guards of their blasters, then paused. Rhayne had asked her to kill only when needed. Sighing, she set one blaster to stun, and gave the pirates a second shot of dreamland.

Now to take over the *Steady On*—and make sure the item she'd been hired to safeguard was still on board.

Once Lassa told Jiro where Captain Rhayne's fleet was supposedly based, he, of course, decided immediately to take the initiative and send what ships were on Florrum to attack. Lassa encouraged him to send all his men, but he stubbornly shook his head.

"Hondo said he wanted the cargo unloaded," he insisted.

That was really too bad, but Lassa took comfort in knowing that she'd just sent all the intact ships on Florrum and every pirate but

Jiro, those sprawled snoring on the ground, and the few unloading the *Steady On* off on a wild caranak chase. With gusto, Lassa spun outrageous tales of the terrors the "evil Captain Rhayne" perpetrated upon her hardworking crew, buying time for Ventress. Jiro swallowed it all, apparently having decided that since she had defeated a Jedi, Lassa was entirely trustworthy.

A movement caught Rhayne's eye. Ventress's slender, robed figure blended so well with the shadows that she was easy to miss. *She's very good*, Rhayne thought.

"So tell me more about this ale that your Captain Rhayne hoards all to herself," Jiro prodded, plunking down his empty cup and reaching for a refill.

"Ale? Oh no, it's Tivraki whiskey," Rhayne said, watching Ventress out of the corner of her eye while smiling at Jiro. "And a finer thing has never touched your lips."

Jiro leered hopefully at the implied invitation. Ventress made her way to the door and slipped outside. Lassa waited, continuing to exchange suggestive remarks with Jiro. She gave it a few minutes more, then unobtrusively placed both hands below the table, pressed a button on her bracer, and gave Jiro a bright smile.

"Well, I can't say this hasn't been fun, but I must be going." She indicated the cup of green liquid. "Thanks for the, ah... whatever that was."

Jiro's green eyes narrowed. "What're you talking about?"

"My ride should be here right about..." She cocked her head, and was rewarded by the unmistakable sound of a ship landing in the outside arena.

"Now."

Faster than she would have given him credit for, considering the amount of alcohol he had imbibed, Jiro leaped over the table with a roar. Rhayne darted away, pressing the switch on the lightsaber. It activated with a *snap-hiss*, almost startling her with its speed.

A sword was a sword, however, and Lassa Rhayne knew how to use one.

Jiro grabbed for a blaster someone had left on the table, but Rhayne slammed the lightsaber down, slicing through both blaster and table with as little effort as if she were cutting through butter. Jiro growled and threw a stool at her. Again, Rhayne waved the yellow, humming blade and cut the piece of furniture in half.

She laughed with sheer delight. What a glorious weapon! She swung it simply to hear the sound it made.

"Which of you is the Jedi?" blurted Jiro.

"Jedi?" came a smooth voice trembling with indignation. "In my hall? Again?"

Jiro and Rhayne whirled simultaneously to see Hondo Ohnaka silhouetted in the triangular doorway. He carried an electrostaff which sparked magenta at both sharp ends and stood like an aristocrat, head high, one hand on his hip, his duster billowing about him. The effect was spoiled by the Kowakian monkey-lizard perched on his shoulder. Hondo strode forward, fairly vibrating with offense.

"Jiro! You imbecile! What have you done? Where is my crew?" He completely ignored the woman holding the active lightsaber. Rhayne stared from one to the other, unsure whether to attack or to burst out laughing.

"Oh, hello, boss," Jiro said miserably. "This lady here came saying she wanted to defect from the Blood Bone Order and join us instead."

"Of course she does. Everyone knows Lassa Rhayne is a tyrant. Am I not correct? Hmm?" He peered alertly at Rhayne, expecting confirmation. She nodded wordlessly.

"And—she brought us—I mean you, boss—a Jedi she'd captured. Said we could hold her for ransom and—"

"Da-da-da-da!" Hondo cut him off with an imperious, irritated gesture. "I leave you alone for half a day—half a day!—and look what you have done. No more ransoming Jedi! That never ends well. Bad for business."

"But... it was like this beautiful fruit just fell, right into my lap!" Jiro pleaded.

Hondo sighed and placed two fingers to his temple under his helmet as if in pain. "How many times must I tell you, Jiro. You cannot trust such unexpected gifts. Fruit never falls into your lap *unless you shake the tree first!*" He looked at Rhayme, spreading his arms in a helpless manner. "You see what I have to deal with."

"I certainly do," Rhayme said, not without sympathy.

"Now, then," and he turned to her, "what do you *really* want?"

Rhayme sobered and drew herself up, meeting his eyes evenly. "To take back what's mine." She pointed the lightsaber at him. "You stole my haul, Hondo Ohnaka. You see..." and she smiled fiercely. "I'm Lassa Rhayme."

"You? The terrifying captain of the *Opportunity*?" He eyed her up and down. "Not what I expected. Not at all." He clucked his tongue and shook his head sadly. "Little girl," he said, "did you think I had come alone?"

And the hitherto empty chamber echoed with the sound of weapons being drawn.

Lassa smiled. "Did you think I did?"

Sudden perplexed cries of pain and anger came from the entrance area of the grand hall, followed by blaster fire. Hondo turned to look, and in that moment, Lassa sprang.

She brought the lightsaber arcing down, but Hondo recovered in time to block it with his electrostaff. His eyes narrowed behind his goggles. "This is a fight you cannot win, my dear. You may have the laser sword, but you don't have the Force."

"Don't need it."

He swung the staff low, but she leaped up and it sliced only air. A second jump brought her onto the table, and she swung with the lightsaber. This time, he struck it hard and the impact



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jarred her injured shoulder. Gritting her teeth, Lassa kicked out and up, and the electrostaff flew from Hondo's hands.

"Not bad," Hondo admitted. He recovered the weapon and vaulted up to join her, shoving one of the sparking ends of the staff like a spear. She parried, but let him drive her down the table, pretending to be unsure of her footing. A smile curved his thin mouth, and he feinted, dodging her blow and bringing the staff down. At the last second, Rhayme swerved and dove for a blaster someone had left behind. In one graceful

movement, she grabbed it, fired at Hondo, and flung the lightsaber toward the doorway.

Ventress—don't fail me...

Ventress had been using a combination of the Force and the pirates' own blasters to methodically mow them down. It was almost too easy. She'd already incapacitated the half-dozen who had been unloading the cargo ship, and Hondo had brought only another ten back with him. There was an ample supply of things to hurl at them—pitchers, a crate and the sharp-edged tools it was filled with, mugs, stools, even the pirates themselves could be used to knock their fellows down. It was good exercise, and Ventress welcomed the chance to work up a sweat while fighting hated Weequays. Respectful of Rhayme's wishes, she didn't shoot to kill, but several of them were on the ground writhing in pain from blaster shots to their arms or legs.

Suddenly Ventress felt a quick, bright urgency in the Force. She whirled, looking toward the far end of the hall, and saw her lightsaber hurtling upward.

It turned end over end, still lit. Some of Hondo's pirates tried to grab it in mid-air, and paid with their fingers. Others, more wisely, dove out of the way. Ventress shot out her hand and the hilt smacked into her palm. She grinned as she sensed the tension in the remaining four pirates skyrocket. At that moment, she heard the sound of another ship landing outside, and felt the presence of two-dozen life forms racing across the landing field.

She grinned, and set to.

"Not so fast!" Hondo warned as Lassa turned to fire on him. He struck her full in the chest with the end of the electrostaff and Lassa gasped, flailing helplessly as the jolts surged through her. She crumpled, gasping, and tumbled limply off the table, spasming on the ground.

He leaped lightly down and gazed at her. "A good effort, my dear. I'm impressed. You almost lived up to your—"

Rhayme lifted the blaster and aimed it directly at his chest.

"—reputation," Hondo finished.

"It's set to kill," she warned him. "Throw away the staff."

"Surely we can work this out like two civilized pirates," he protested, but did as she ordered.

Lassa got to her feet, still feeling the effects of the staff, but forcing herself not to show them. "On your knees, hands behind your head."

Again, Hondo obeyed. "Come now, Captain Rhayme, let us not be hasty."

She stepped forward, placing the tip of the blaster between his eyes. "You mocked me earlier. I think you've changed your tune."

"Most certainly," he said. To his credit, his voice was completely calm.

"I'm taking what's mine."

She fired.

"Hondo was rather charming, actually," Lassa said, finishing her account as she and Ventress sat in her cabin aboard the *Opportunity*. On the table beside the bounty hunter sat a nondescript metal box about a third of a meter high. "Of course I wasn't about to kill him, but he didn't know that. It'll be fun to hear what sort of rumors he'll spread."

"Well done," Ventress said as Rhayme uncorked a bottle of aged Tivraki whiskey. "So... I've been wondering something."

"Fire away."

"You don't have any tattoos." She'd noticed it immediately upon meeting Rhayme. All the Pantorans Ventress had encountered adorned their faces with bright yellow tattoos. She wasn't sure

what they signified—family affiliation, social rank, personal achievements—but they all had them.

"That's because I have no loyalties other than to my crew," Lassa said. "They are my family. Otherwise—I belong only to myself. I am my own woman."

Ventress nodded. She liked that. She thought of her own tattoos, and how much they meant to her. Rhayme's unmarried face obviously conveyed the same pride.

Rhayme raised her glass. "To success—and perhaps, new friends."

Asajj was surprised at her reaction. She didn't have "friends." But she'd grown to admire Lassa, and the other woman had kept to every part of their bargain. And... she was good company. Ventress said nothing, merely gave a fleeting smile as their glasses clinked. The whiskey was delicious—a warm, slow comfort slipping down her throat.

"Much better than what they serve in the bars on Thirteen-Thirteen," Ventress said. "I could get used to drinking this."

"Why don't you?" Lassa said. "I can provide erratic but profitable income, bed and board, adventure, fair treatment, and the company of the woman who beat Hondo Ohnaka in single combat." She winked a golden eye.

It sounded good. Very good. And for a long moment, Asajj Ventress was tempted. But then she thought of all the company she would bring along with her; the shades of the dead, the remnants of dark memories, and a wariness that would likely never fade. Ventress would never trust anyone, not really, not even this remarkable woman with whom she had partnered for a brief time. She would always be alone, and she accepted that.

"While that's a fine offer," she said, "I must decline."

She sensed Rhayme's genuine disappointment, but the Pantoran recovered quickly. "If you ever change your mind, the offer stands."

"And if you ever need a bounty hunter, I'm not hard to find."

"Deal." They shook hands. "In the meantime," Rhayme said, "let's take a look at this item that's been so problematic."

Ventress glanced at the box beside her. "Part of the deal was that I don't look at it."

"You've worked pretty hard for your bounty this time, Asajj. Go on. You can always say you were making sure it wasn't damaged in the fighting."

Ventress considered that. "Sheb does strike me as a dealer who'd appreciate that concern."

The lock was easy to pick, and Ventress carefully lifted the lid. A small force field in the box itself prevented unauthorized handling. Ventress was seldom moved by beauty alone, but this time, even her eyes widened as Rhayme gasped softly.

The object that had given her so much trouble was no gem, or weapon, but a simple statuette. A sea mammal with four flippers and an elongated muzzle was caught in a moment of joyous freedom, its small gem eyes sparkling, its sleek body curled beneath it so its tail merged with the wave that formed the base. The stone from which it was carved was a breathtaking shade of blue. The entire image—its sense of action, of grace and power and playfulness, its delight in movement, even its hue—seemed to Ventress to be a reflection of the Pantoran woman sitting before her.

A pirate's life—but not for me, she thought.

"A pity you can't keep it," Rhayme said.

Ventress merely nodded. With unwonted gentleness, she closed the lid and locked it.

"I do my job," she said, and slid her glass over for a refill. ☹️

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DEATH TO THE DARK SIDE!

THE MAKING OF *DARK EMPIRE* – PART III

BY MICHAEL KOGGE

INSIDER CONCLUDES ITS LOOK BACK AT THE ICONIC COMIC SERIES FROM THE EARLY 1990S.

Right, from top: Cam Kennedy's pencils become more fully-formed as Tom Veitch's dialogue is added by letterer Todd Klein.

In the beginning, there was the dark side and the light. Those on the side of good, the guardians of peace and justice in the galaxy, followed the light. Those who sought the heights of power or desired the galaxy for themselves, embraced the dark. Over 25 millennia, in a galaxy of long ago and far, far away, devotees of each battled in a seemingly eternal war of noble Jedi against evil Sith. If there was an intersection, it was most often when a soldier of the light was tempted and turned to the dark, only to meet an end in sorrow and despair. For as a wise Master once warned his young apprentice, "Once you start down the dark path, forever will it dominate your destiny."

In the mythological tradition of storytelling, warnings like these foreshadowed future conflicts. The genius of Tom Veitch and Cam Kennedy's *Dark Empire* was that they wove an entire epic comic series around that one line of dialogue. They turned that wise Master's young apprentice, Luke Skywalker, to the dark side.

And the dark side nearly won, taking the comic with it.

ARTIST IN JEOPARDY

By March 1990, Kennedy had completed all of his painted pages for issue one of *Dark Empire* based on Veitch's script. The plan called

for Marvel Comics' Epic imprint to release the title because the story was more "adult" than the previous *Marvel Star Wars* series which had ended years before. But in the previous May, Archie Goodwin, the editor who had shepherd the

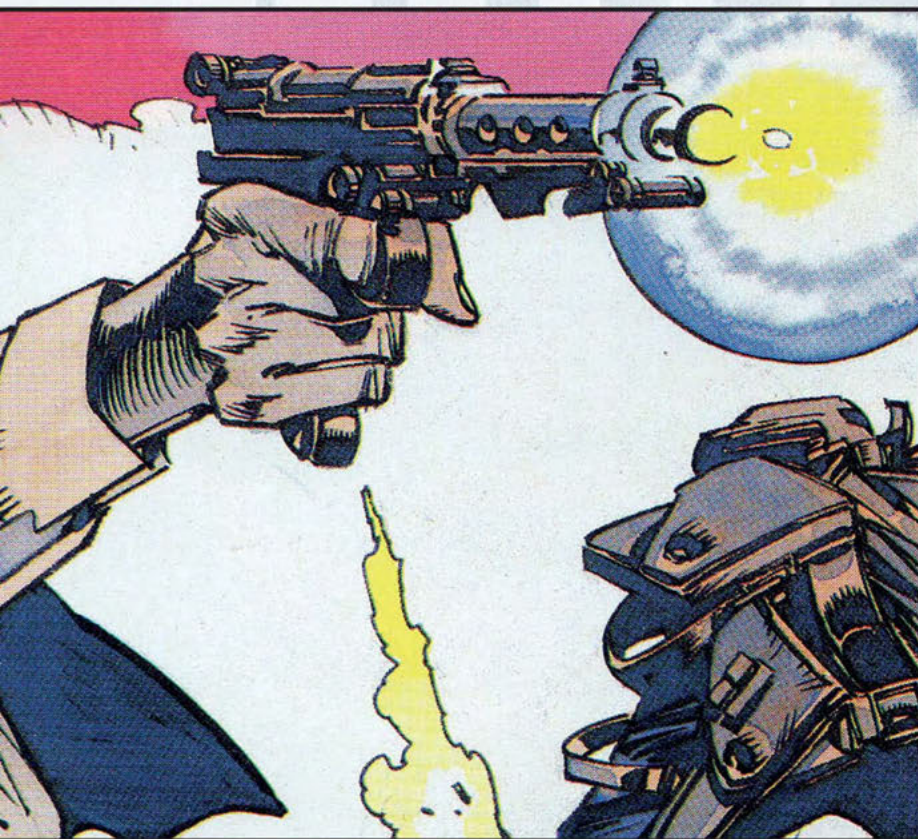


project (and who was also one of the great *Star Wars* comics writers), departed Marvel for a move to DC.

The new editors who replaced him didn't understand *Star Wars* like Goodwin did, and consequently failed to make *Dark Empire* a priority in Marvel's publishing program.

When contracts were not forthcoming after a year of work and correspondence, Kennedy informed Veitch and Lucasfilm's

director of publishing, Lucy Wilson, that he would have to leave *Dark Empire* and seek other work. This was a serious blow to the project, for the unique style of Kennedy's



watercolor painted pages would be nearly impossible for any other artist to replicate. Wilson and Veitch both wrote to Kennedy in Scotland, begging him to stay on the project. But when the contract still didn't appear a few months later, Kennedy said he couldn't wait any longer, and Veitch recommended to Wilson other artists who could finish the series, among them Andy and Adam Kubert, who were just starting out in the business, but would later become legends in their own right.

VISIONS OF THE FUTURE

Potentially losing Kennedy as an artist wasn't the only difficulty Veitch had to deal with to keep the project afloat. Though Veitch had first approached Lucasfilm about creating a *Star Wars* comic back in November 1988, in the intervening year Bantam Books had acquired the license to publish *Star Wars* novels. At first, both sides were told not to worry. The comics and the novels could co-exist separately, as they had during their previous incarnations. But soon it became clear that Bantam's novels would be set in the same post-*Return of the Jedi* time period as was *Dark Empire*, and the events that happened in them might interfere with or contradict what Veitch had planned for his series. Fans would undoubtedly question what was the "official" story and what was not. Sales could be affected if one story was dismissed in favor of the other. Therefore, a continuity between the series needed to be established in a way never before realized for a licensed property.

"At the time we did *Dark Empire*, there wasn't as much weight paid to an integrated universe—we're talking early 1990s, before *The Phantom Menace* had come out—and some of the novels [*Splinter of the Mind's Eye*, ed.] had already been retconned out of existence. It was all being frantically created at the same time," says Barbara Kesel, who would later come aboard to edit *Dark Empire*. "I do remember a miniature freak-out in the office when we learned that twins were in the offing for Leia, when our story had focused more on the idea of [a] 'child.'"

Lucasfilm did not have a Keeper of the Holocron or Story Group at the time, so much of the handling of continuity fell into the laps of Tom Veitch and the author of the Bantam novels, Timothy Zahn. Like any two artists (or any two fans), they each had their own visions of what *Star Wars* was and consequently where to take the

Right, from top:
Dave Dorman's
stunning pencil work
for the cover of the
first issue; Boba Fett
(and Dengar!) makes
a surprise comeback.

Opposite page:
The terrifying World
Devastator makes
its presence felt
on Mon Calamari.

story and the characters. Zahn had made his reputation on military sci-fi novels, and took his trilogy of novels in that direction, writing page-turners that focused on an Imperial admiral's ingenious campaign to restore the Empire. Veitch, too, respected the military aspects of *Star Wars*, but his background in philosophy and theology (as a former Benedictine monk) sparked his interest in its mythological and moral roots. As in all great stories, setting and character are intricately linked—and in the case of *Star Wars*, it appeared to Veitch that George Lucas had created his fictional universe to explore an individual's spiritual development. Since the original *Star Wars* trilogy was about Luke Skywalker embracing his connection to the good (or light) side of the "Force," thereby redeeming his evil father, Veitch perceived the next logical step would be Luke's temptation by the corrupting influence of ultimate power. This echoes many of the great myths and biblical stories, where in order to fully comprehend and join the light, a hero must venture into the deepest regions of the dark.

"The main inspiration comes from C.G. Jung, who advises 'integrating the Shadow' as necessary to personal growth. Taking the 'heroic' position of endlessly fighting the bad guys just leads to stasis.... and even defeat. In my opinion, both Obi-Wan and Yoda would have 'secret knowledge' of the dark side," says Veitch.



As a veteran in comics, Veitch understood he was writing for a visual medium that relied on fantastical illustrations and scenarios for its storytelling power. Consequently, he resolved to risk excess when scripting his panels and images, as the *Star Wars* films had, rather than play it safe. He backed up the big visual moment in issue one—the Force Storm—by

explaining it was not a chaotic super weapon, but a "function of two powerful minds focused on each other: Luke and the Emperor. It's as if a wormhole in the Force had opened between them, causing a massive release of energy." In creating the darksiders on Byss, he referenced such societies as the Assassins' Guild under Hassan-I Sabbah, Hitler's

Gestapo, and even the dark angels serving Satan. "The attempt to create a stable society based on the power of the dark side is what the Emperor—and *Star Wars*—is all about," Veitch wrote to Lucasfilm.

Most importantly, he argued that Luke could learn about the dark side without being devoured by it. "The 'secrets' of the dark side *must* be assimilated in order for the dark side to be finally conquered. Otherwise there is only endless combat, endless war, numberless deaths. Here we are working with the principal that's described in Jungian psychology as 'integration of the Shadow.' See into your Enemy and learn finally that he has an aspect of *yourself*. This simple idea is the key to what I'm trying to do. It's there in the films, and the relationship of Luke and his father. Ultimately it must be shown to be true in Luke's relationship to the Emperor—and to the dark side."

Veitch recognized a simple solution to prevent any contradictions that could arise between his series and Zahn's: *Dark Empire* could be set shortly after Zahn's trilogy and he would write an opening crawl to bridge



the two series. Lucasfilm agreed. This set a precedent for *Star Wars* continuity. Stories would be logged on a timeline, which would give direction for future artists and writers, but not inhibit their talents and unique perspectives. This kind of creative freedom was one of the reasons that the expanded *Star Wars* universe became so bold, interesting, and sometimes beautifully strange.

By late 1990, however, Veitch's solutions might all be in vain if *Dark Empire* could not find a sure path to publication.

A DARK HORSE TO THE RESCUE

While the editorial shift at Marvel put the project in limbo, a new party inquired with Lucasfilm regarding the *Star Wars* comic license. Dark Horse Comics owner Mike Richardson had seen some of Cam Kennedy's art for issue one. At the San Diego Comic Con

DARK HORSE COMICS OWNER MIKE RICHARDSON SAID, "CAM KENNEDY IS THE BEST STAR WARS ARTIST IN COMICS. NOBODY ELSE EVEN COMES CLOSE."

in 1990, he approached Lucy Wilson about acquiring *Dark Empire* for publication. Dark Horse had great success publishing comics based on other movie projects, such as *Aliens*, and felt they could do the same with *Star Wars*. Moreover, Dark Horse was willing to wait until Kennedy was finished with his other projects and negotiate properly for his services. "Mike Richardson told Lucy, 'Cam is just the best *Star Wars* artist in comics. Nobody else even comes close,'" Veitch wrote to Kennedy in December 1990.

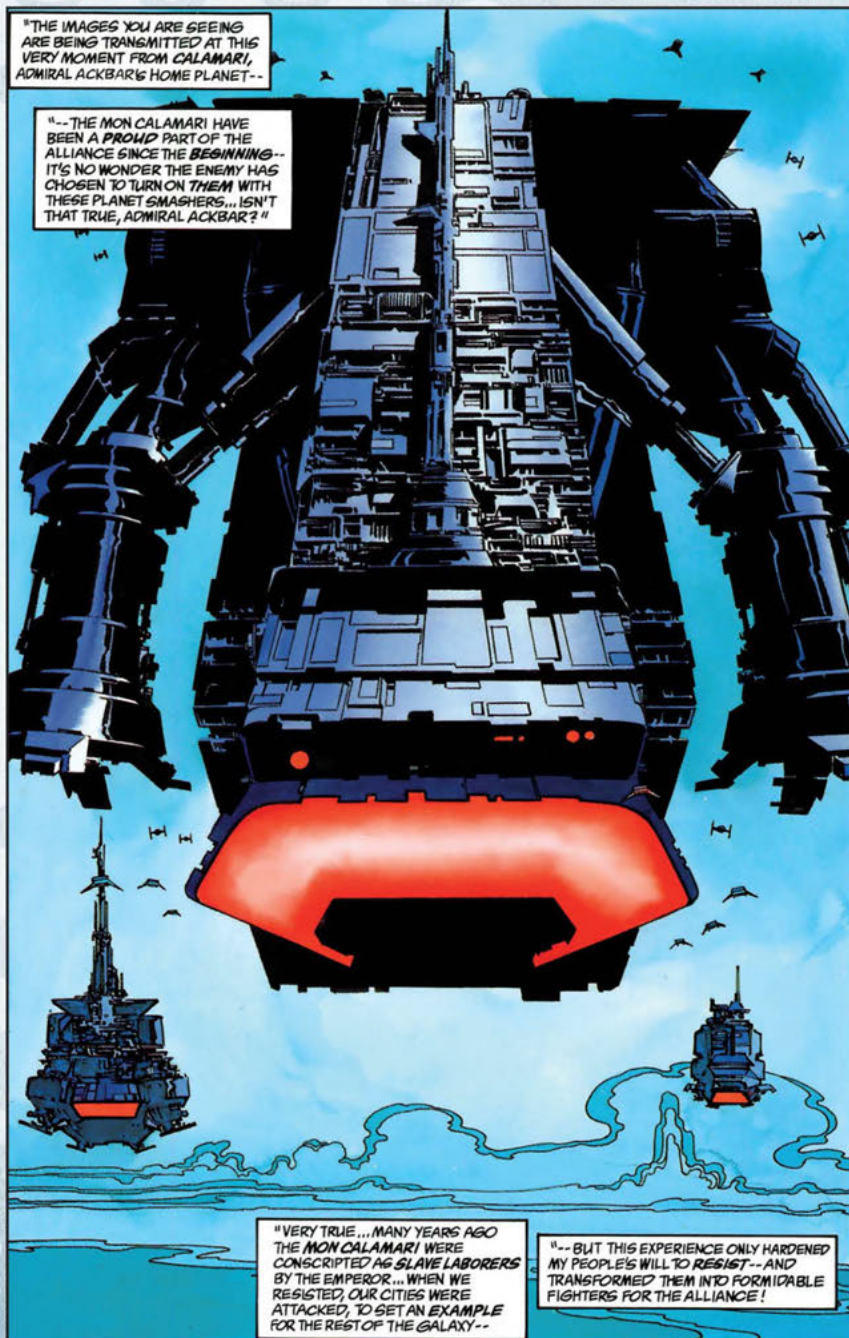
Though Marvel lobbied to continue forward with the project, Lucasfilm decided to grant the *Star Wars* license to Dark Horse, beginning a 23-year chapter in *Star Wars* comics that ended only recently.

More importantly, *Dark Empire* had found a home.

CAM KENNEDY'S STAR WARS

The wait for Cam Kennedy to rejoin the project proved worth it. Though he had never watched the *Star Wars* films until he became involved in the project, he rendered the characters, the vehicles, and the worlds of the galaxy so confidently and so completely in his own style of painted watercolors that fans, critics, and other major artists noticed. Original *Star Wars* concept artist Ralph McQuarrie even wrote that he looked at Kennedy's art with "envy."

Kennedy himself warmly recalls an encounter with one of the industry's giants. "I remember speaking to Mœbius," says Kennedy, of the famous French artist, "when we both happened to be at a New York convention and I had some of my *Dark Empire* pages with me. He came over and said, 'Ahh, we must exchange pages.' And I said, 'Which ones would you like?' So he picked a page and then he went and got one of his pages and we swapped pages."



TOM VEITCH ON THE LIGHT AND THE DARK

At the time we approached Lucasfilm, it was generally understood that there would be no more *Star Wars* films, and the comics franchise was dead. Both Cam and I saw that as a golden opportunity. Then, when Lucas gave us 'carte blanche' to imagine the post-*Return of the Jedi* *Star Wars* universe, I leaped at the opportunity to explore the mythological underpinnings of the Force—both the light side and the dark side.

So, in the text pages for the very first *Dark Empire* comic, I wrote:

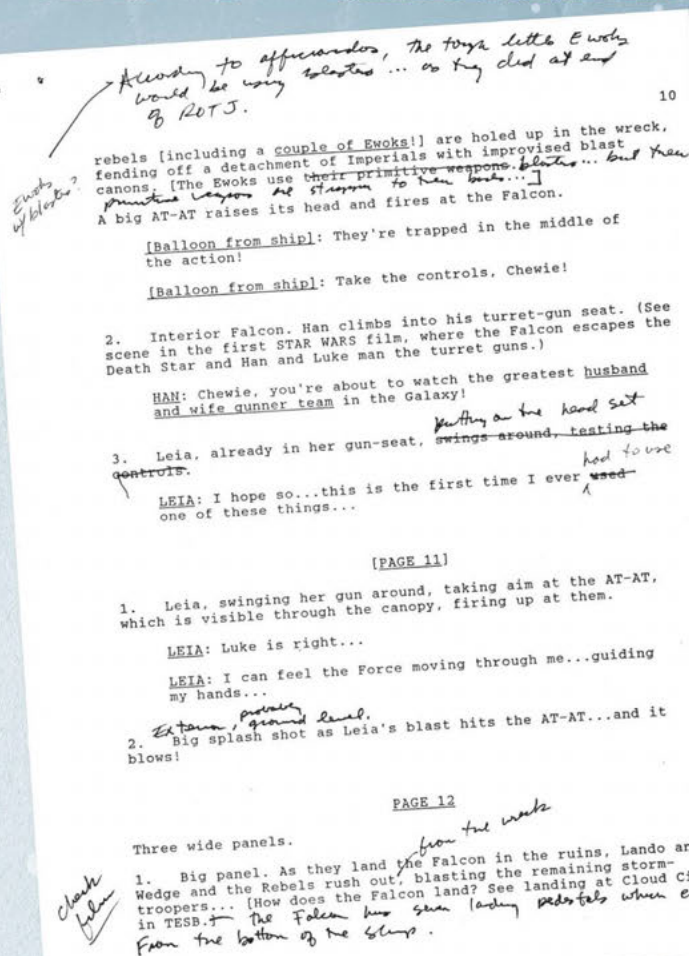
'A Jedi, from the beginning, must do what most men cannot: develop a sensitivity to the very existence of the Force. He must actually feel it, feel his oneness with it, feel it tangibly flowing through him, and then his conscious awareness must join the Force, so that the knowledge available through the Force becomes his own. At some point a Jedi learns to abandon reliance on his own mind and its effort. He learns to stretch out with his feelings, to let go of his limited idea of himself, and to move with the deeply instinctive levels of his being. By listening, by becoming peaceful, by turning his attention to the Force, he finds that place where his individuality is joined to the knowledge and power of the Universe.'

Opposed to this knowledge is the dark side, which channels the Force through anger, the will-to-power, unfettered violence, and instilling fear in the weak-minded. Luke's father followed that path to power—and to his own destruction. Thus, as the films made clear, Luke Skywalker has both sides of the Force in him. I am thinking especially of the scene in *The Empire Strikes Back* where Luke enters the cave on Dagobah and has a vision of Darth Vader—then, after decapitating Vader, discovers his own face behind Vader's mask!

Master Yoda showed Luke that shadow of himself so he would know that both the light side and the dark side of the Force were his (genetic) heritage. And Luke understood that in order to free himself—and his family—he had to penetrate that vision of himself and make it give up its secrets.

Thus it seemed to us (and to Archie Goodwin as well), there would inevitably arise the story of what happens when a Jedi Knight takes it upon himself to enter and investigate the dark mind of his father. Theoretically this could be an epic story exploring the deeper meaning of *Star Wars*—a character story beyond blasters, lightsaber duels, and explosive warship battles among the stars.

But Master Yoda warned him it would not be easy. His real strength would always be the light side of the Force: 'Remember, a Jedi's strength flows from the Force. But beware. Anger, fear, aggression. The dark side are they. Once you start down the dark path, forever will it dominate your destiny. Luke... Luke... do not... do not underestimate the powers of the Emperor, or suffer your father's fate you will.'



The art of *Dark Empire* advertised for itself. One didn't need to be a fan of *Star Wars* or superhero comics to appreciate it. "Cam's painted art was a striking new approach for comics, let alone 'licensed' comics," says former Dark Horse editor, Barbara Kesel. "The intense colors and watercolor approach were so visually different from the average comics of the time that the series would have stood out on the stands even without a good story."

AN EMPIRE FOR THE AGES

When issue one of *Dark Empire* premiered in December 1991, three years after Veitch had sent his first letter to Lucasfilm, it stunned the comics world, selling hundreds of thousands of copies both in issues and as collected graphic novels. Filmmaker George Lucas, an avid comic book art collector himself, was so impressed

GEORGE LUCAS, AN AVID COMIC BOOK ART COLLECTOR HIMSELF, WAS SO IMPRESSED HE GAVE COPIES OF DARK EMPIRE TO HIS EMPLOYEES AS THE ANNUAL LUCASFILM CHRISTMAS GIFT.

hyperspace. This would be a small clue, a setup for what might happen later in our story.

Roll-up:

Following the destruction of the second DEATH STAR, and the deaths of DARTH VADER and THE EMPEROR, an ominous calm descended over the Galaxy.

Then, Without warning, the worlds of the Imperial System erupted in civil war, as factions within the Imperial Navy battled the Emperor's ruling circle for control of the Empire.

~~In the meantime~~, The Rebel Alliance ~~had~~ regrouped its forces on the rim of the Galaxy. Broadcasting their cry of rebellion from an uncharted outpost world, the Rebels ~~also~~ launched a wave after wave of warships into the conflict that raged at the Galactic Core.

The Rebel assaults were hit-and-run operations, designed to sow confusion among the feuding Imperials, and thus hasten the ultimate restoration of the Republic.

Long years of struggle passed, and for a time it seemed the Galaxy might descend into a state of perpetual anarchy...

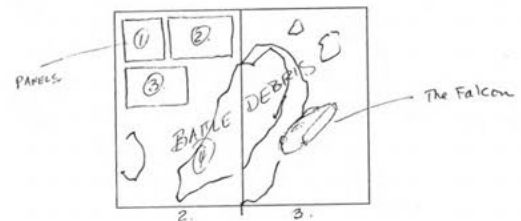
This will be an interesting scene, as THE MILLENNIUM FALCON and TWO ALLIANCE ESCORT FRIGATES come out of hyperspace amidst the wreckage and remains of a great space battle. [For Escort Frigates, see Sourcebook, p 30-31.]

The Falcon and the Alliance ships are on a rescue mission: A captured Star Destroyer, manned by LANDO CALRISIAN and LUKE SKYWALKER, has crashed in the IMPERIAL CITY, on the ruling world of the great Imperial System.

The kind of splash layout we want to use here, for maximum visual effect, follows a style developed by Al Williamson: large visuals, possibly bleeds, will depict the large-scale action and special effects. Small inset panels or cut-outs will cut to interiors, showing the characters and most of the dialogue.

Much of the book would consist of these kinds of layouts, giving Cam the maximum opportunity to paint "Star Wars-scale" visuals. When these splash-layouts are used, the character panels would be always in the same positions, so that the reader has an expectation of where to look.

Here, for example, is a sketch of the kind of layout we would see on pages 2-3:



PANEL 1. HAN SOLO, at the controls of the MILLENNIUM FALCON, looking grim and a bit worried, staring straight at the reader. CESS LEIA, ~~seated~~ behind him, also looking at the camera with a worried expression. Han would wear his traditional outfit, dressed for action -- most likely wearing a costume we n't seen before. As mentioned in the proposal, they are five or six years r, and they are now married! Perhaps One of her hands is resting lightly on Han's lder.

(Note: ~~Since~~ ^{Leia's} ~~from~~ ^{there} are two tall seats behind the pilot + co-pilot seats in the M.F. cockpit. Leia must be standing in the shot... the strapping herself in in panel 2. y



WITH ALL HIS HATRED FUNNELED INTO THE DEATH STORM, THE MALEVOLENT GENIUS IS CAUGHT OFF GUARD BY THE INVISIBLE WAVE OF LIFE ENERGY SURGING OVER HIM, SEPARATING HIM FROM HIS POWER--

ENVELOPED IN LIGHT, CUT OFF FROM HIS GREAT RAGE, THE EMPEROR FINDS HIMSELF UNABLE TO CONTROL THE DARK POWER HE HAS UNLEASHED--

--AND THE CATAclysmic STORM TURNS AGAINST ITS MAKER!

in addition to being just right."

Dark Empire remains perhaps the most spectacular Star Wars comic ever produced, and many would argue that few other comics since even come close. But to Veitch, it isn't so much a spectacle as it is, "a character story beyond blasters, lightsaber duels, and explosive

warship battles among the stars." It is a story where even the greatest of galactic heroes, Luke Skywalker, must confront his dark side.

And even Luke Skywalker must be redeemed. ☹

From opposite page above, left to right: Tom Veitch's annotated scripts.

Left: Cam Kennedy's distinctive style and moody color palette makes Dark Empire a standout amongst other comic book series.

by it he gave copies of the graphic novel away to his employees as the annual Lucasfilm Christmas gift. Most of all, its incredible success changed how licensed properties were handled in the industry. In the past, publishers placed their lower grade talent on licensed comics because conventional wisdom held that the logo would sell a book over the art or story. Dark Empire, however, took the opposite approach, with Veitch and Kennedy treating it as highly as they would their original work. This made other top creators want to put their own indelible mark on properties like Star Wars.

"Tom loved the Star Wars stories and wanted to add a vision of his own to the mythos. He embraced the idea of the comic book as a novel and worked to make it epic," Kesel says. "Add in the Dave Dorman covers, and you had a comic that fans just couldn't ignore. It looked more 'grown-up' than the previous Marvel series and gave off a sense that you should take it seriously, and fans did. Star Wars fans were reaching their adult years, so they responded favorably to the series, and comics themselves were growing up and being taken more seriously. It was the right project at the right time,

MORE TO SAY

Dark Empire is available from Marvel.

The Light and Darkness War is out now.

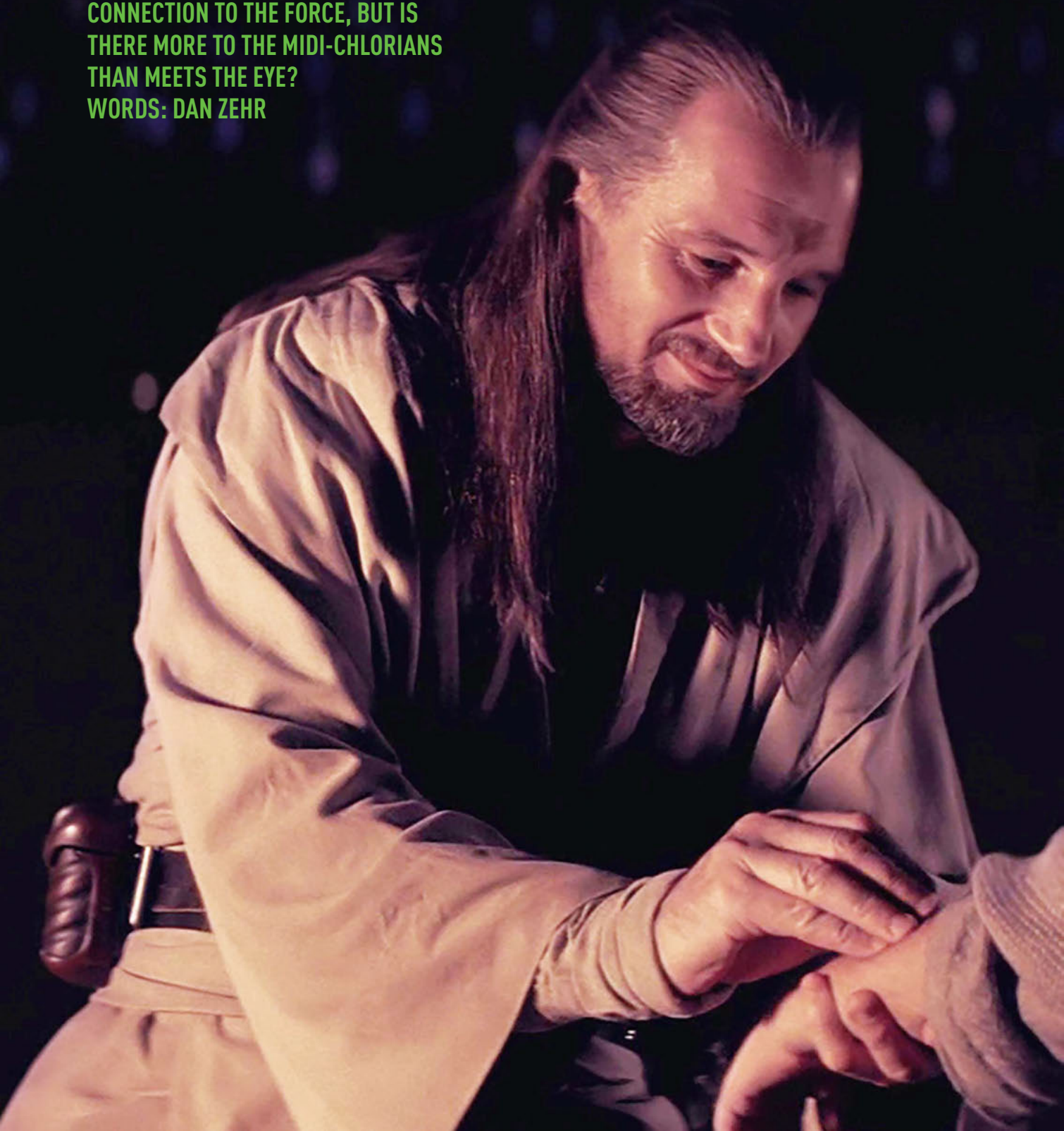
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HAVE YOU?

UNDER THE MICROSCOPE: A CLOSER LOOK AT

THEY ARE THE MYSTERIOUS CREATURES
WHOSE PRESENCE SIGNIFIES A BEING'S
CONNECTION TO THE FORCE, BUT IS
THERE MORE TO THE MIDI-CHLORIANS
THAN MEETS THE EYE?

WORDS: DAN ZEHR



MIDI-CHLORIANS

1999 was a banner year for *Star Wars* fans, as it saw the release of a brand new film, *The Phantom Menace*. The first installment of the prequel trilogy brought us many wonderful new characters, planets, and events that added to the tapestry of our beloved saga. Finally, the story of Anakin Skywalker would be told.

However, one scene in particular took fandom by storm, as it introduced the polarizing term, "midi-chlorians." Once Jedi Master Qui-Gon Jinn initiated the idea of midi-chlorians to Anakin Skywalker, the questions began: What are midi-chlorians, and what do they mean for *Star Wars*? Is the Force biological or genetic? What about the spiritual aspects of the Force? Why aren't midi-chlorians mentioned in the original trilogy?

UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

A closer examination of what midi-chlorians are reveals a fascinating, complex concept that beautifully blends many aspects of mythological, spiritual, and biological constructs into one term.

The first time audiences learned of the existence of the Force, Obi-Wan Kenobi explained to a young Luke Skywalker, "The Force is what gives a Jedi his power; it's an energy field created by all things. It surrounds us, penetrates us, binds the galaxy together." Based on this explanation, the Force, from its onset, was

not purely spiritual; all things create it. This beautiful description of the harmony and balance of the Force has biological implications as well.

Many audience members (myself included) did not immediately grasp the organic nature of the Force, but George Lucas had a cooperative, balanced idea in mind all along. George Lucas once told noted *Star Wars* author J. W. Rinzler:

"I'm assuming that the midi-chlorians are a race that everybody knows about [in the world of *Star Wars*]. The way you interact and interface with this larger energy field [the Force] is through the midi-chlorians, which are sensitive to the energy. They are at the core of your life, which is the cell, the living cell. They are in a symbiotic relationship with the cell. And then, because they're all interconnected as one, they can communicate with the larger Force field. That's how you deal with the Force."

Qui-Gon Jinn explained midi-chlorians to Anakin Skywalker as, "... a microscopic life form that resides within all living cells. Without the midi-chlorians, life could not exist, and we would have no knowledge of the Force. They continually speak to us, telling us the will of the Force."

Insider asked four *Star Wars* experts their opinion of what midi-chlorians are: Kyle Newman (director of *Fanboys*), Ian Doescher (author of *William Shakespeare's Star Wars* series), Paul McDonald (author of *The Star Wars Heresies*), and Cory Clubb (co-host of the *Coffee With Kenobi* podcast).



HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN MIDI-CHLORIANS?

Kyle Newman: I love midi-chlorians. Despite their biological explanation in *The Phantom Menace*, they still exist on a spiritual level. Just because the Jedi can quantify them doesn't remove the magic from the topic. The midi-chlorians are merely a conduit into this great and wondrous energy field. They are *not* the Force itself; they're just a way to commune with it or tap into it.

Luke reaches the apex of potential because of his hereditary line. Many revered it, respected it (Ackbar says, "May the Force be with you," along with others), but none could even come close to harnessing its unique attributes other than a chosen few. It's extremely

clear that Luke, and subsequently Leia, are special because of their genetics.

Ian Doescher: Honestly, I try not to, but if I had to, I would probably say midi-chlorians are a life-form/life-force that live in all things (kind of like atoms) and imbue all things with energy or, if you will, with the Force.

Paul McDonald: Fortunately, Qui-Gon's speech to Anakin in *The Phantom Menace* is the perfect jumping off point for any discussion about this. At no point are the midi-chlorians and the Force said to be interchangeable, and they bear much the same relationship as a radio merely picking up a radio signal. Midi-chlorians are the conduits, the bridge, to that mystical energy field we've been hearing about since the 1970s, not a contradiction of it. They are no more the Force than the speakers are the music they broadcast.

Cory Clubb: Something inside Luke harnessed him to take down the Death Star.

Was it the courage he lacked or the privilege of Ben Kenobi's mentorship? Further still, Yoda invokes these same mysteries on Dagobah, and we as viewers just believe his wisdom and know what he says and does is possible in the fact that Yoda himself understands it. Fast forward to Qui-Gon Jinn's blood sample, and it may break down to something as simple as a test done for a newborn baby.

HOW DO MIDI-CHLORIANS ENHANCE THE MYTHOS?

KN: From a storytelling/filmmaking standpoint, it feels like George Lucas included the notion of midi-chlorians so there was a quantifiable way to both recognize and justify Anakin to the Council. After all, the boy is a slave child outside of the Jedi normal search patterns, and a fatherless Force mystery.

I always assumed that the Empire collected or destroyed much of this information and tech, further submerging the Jedi into myth. By eradicating their central temple, the Emperor went right to the heart. The Jedi's entire infrastructure, their ability to locate and train future generations, was completely destroyed. It was akin to the razing of the Alexandrian Library—one can only conjecture how much knowledge was lost.

ID: The big question when *The Phantom Menace* came out was, do we really need midi-chlorians? Did we need an explanation of what makes the Force what it is?

I think midi-chlorians enhance the mythology of *Star Wars* primarily because they help build the *Star Wars* universe—they expand it and add to our understanding of it. I was recently on a convention panel about



Left: Master manipulator Sheev Palpatine makes a startling admission to Anakin.

Left, opposite page: The final story arc of *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* features Yoda attempting to unravel the mysteries of the Force; Yoda, the Jedi Master with the highest midi-chlorian count—until the discovery of a certain young slave boy on the backwater planet of Tatooine.

how, as an author, you create a world; having more information about midi-chlorians adds to the world George Lucas created.

PM: *The Phantom Menace* is perhaps the most deliberate example of this. Qui-Gon defines symbiosis as “life forms living together for mutual advantage.” This theme runs like a thread throughout the film, whether it is on the planetary scale of the Naboo and the Gungans learning to work together, or the microscopic one of the midi-chlorians and the Force likewise communicating.

In *Ethics for a New Millennium*, the Dalai Lama states that when the lens of symbiosis is taken up, “We begin to see that the universe we inhabit can be understood in terms of a living organism where each cell works in balanced cooperation with every other cell to sustain the whole.”

So symbiosis is perhaps *the* theme of *Star Wars*, and George Lucas provided a solid, concrete metaphor through the midi-chlorians.

CC: How do books help us to understand, rather than folk tales or storied wisdom? Books are physical and we can take the knowledge and go on; wisdom, likewise, is profitable to experience, but is skewed to one’s opinion. Which enhances our existence more? Neither. We go on regardless, thus if another aspect of the Force was revealed, would it change our experience? I’m not sure midi-chlorians enhance the mythology of *Star Wars* or not, but [they do] raise more questions to our own understanding of how the Force works in the *Star Wars* universe.

“I THINK MIDI-CHLORIANS ENHANCE THE MYTHOLOGY OF *STAR WARS*, PRIMARILY BECAUSE THEY HELP EXPAND IT AND ADD TO OUR UNDERSTANDING OF IT.”—IAN DOESCHER

CAN MIDI-CHLORIANS BE BOTH BIOLOGICAL AND SPIRITUAL?

KN: Some complain that there was no mention of midi-chlorians in the original trilogy, so their existence in the prequels is unnecessary... but in fact there was *no need* for midi-chlorians in the original trilogy. Did Obi-Wan *need* to give Luke a blood test the same way Qui-Gon took Anakin’s? No, Luke was a known quantity he had been overseeing his whole life and the descendent of the Chosen One, whereas Anakin was a complete enigma to Qui-Gon—a vergence. And furthermore, since *The Phantom Menace* is the first part of a much larger, ever-expanding saga, the foundations needed to be established. **ID:** I don’t pretend to be an expert in midi-chlorians, so my immediate answer to this question is: Aren’t we? Humans are embodied, fleshy stuff—we’re highly functioning animals, but still biological animals. Yet, we’re also spiritual beings—whether religious or not, each of us

is spiritual in some way and approaches the world with our spiritual selves just as much as with our physical selves. If we can do it, why can’t midi-chlorians?

PM: Curiously, this is another unique spin in the *Star Wars* saga. In this particular mythology, the spiritual is the offspring of the biological world. Physical life is the very root of it, the thing that causes it to grow and expand. Not to mention the fact that it has been established since the original trilogy that Force ability is passed down through families and bloodlines, so it only makes sense that there would be a certain connection between the two, as opposed to an antagonism. This is summed up rather tellingly in *The Power of Myth*. In the words of Joseph Campbell, who was an enormous influence on George Lucas, “Spiritual life is the bouquet, the perfume, the flowering and fulfillment of a human life, not a supernatural virtue imposed upon it.” And that’s exactly what the Force is. That the biological and the mystical can find a common ground, with one a potential ladder leading to the other, can be seen as quite spiritual indeed.

CC: As human beings we strive to understand, and in doing so, we want proof,

MIDI-CHLORIANS ARE A PARADOXICAL BLEND OF ORGANIC AND THE SPIRITUAL; THEY ARE A COMBINATION OF THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS.

but yet we also have the ability to understand things that are greater or beyond ourselves. Our capacity to have a foot in both the spiritual realm as well as the physical, personifies our diversity and connection to one another. I see this as the same way with midi-chlorians; they exist by way of understanding. It's not that midi-chlorians are the Force itself, but that they are vessels of it in physical form. Not parasites, but something like fireflies attracted to light or more simply, wind in a bird's feathers. Imagine for just a moment if Yoda had done a midi-chlorian test on Luke, would that have told him different about Luke's ability in the Force?

NOT CRUDE MATTER

Yoda famously stated on Dagobah, "Luminous beings are we. Not this crude matter," and demonstrated more fully the biological and spiritual connection that the Force contains. His journey through Season Six of *The Clone Wars* verified the association as well. In fact, Yoda's teachings also echo that of a Buddhist

belief: Praying before a meal changes the molecular makeup, making it more wholesome and nutritious. There are cultural implications for the spiritual aspect of things changing the biological chemistry of something. The likely truth of this fully forms Lucas's concept of midi-chlorians, and we are left with a richer, more intriguing, understanding of the Force.

Midi-chlorians are a paradoxical blend of the organic and spiritual; they are a combination of the best of both worlds,

coalescing ideologies from various cultures and religious beliefs into a cohesive blend of faith, genetics, and biology. Further reflection and analysis of midi-chlorians invites much discussion; all the more reason to embrace the mythology that George Lucas created. 🙏

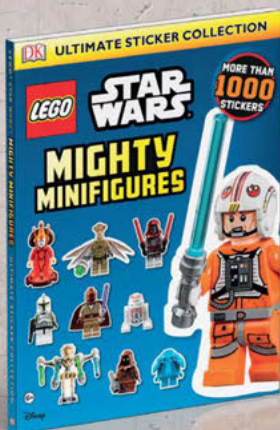
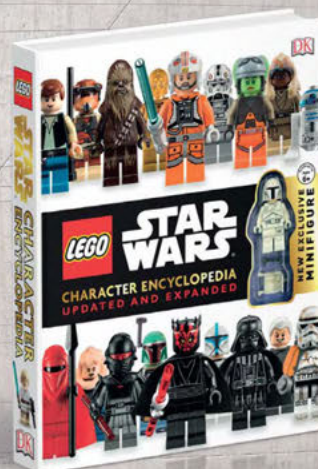
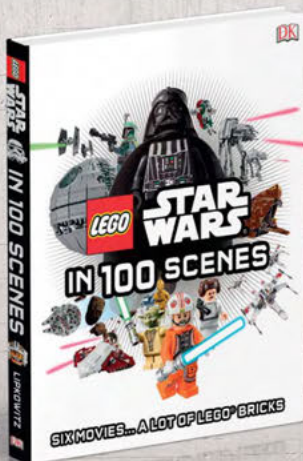
This page: Anakin Skywalker boasted the highest known midi-chlorian count.



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STAR WARS

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ASAJJ VENTRESS

A-TYPICAL ANTI-HERO

TRICIA BARR CONTINUES HER ANALYSIS OF ICONIC *STAR WARS* CHARACTERS. THIS ISSUE, ONE OF THE SAGA'S MOST COMPLICATED VILLAINS.

Often heroes are born of ideas, grand notions of saviors. Heroes must face down villains, the opponents over whom the hero triumphs along their epic journey. Sometimes, though, a story focuses on the arc of a protagonist who lacks usual heroic traits like nobility and selflessness—an anti-hero. The simplest example is Anakin Skywalker's descent into darkness in *Revenge of the Sith*; he is no hero as that chapter of his saga concludes. Since his tragic story unfolded on screen, many more anti-heroes have followed in his wake. One of my favorites is assassin-turned-bounty hunter Asajj Ventress, whose path to greatness was far from typical.

When the *Ultimate Star Wars* writing assignments were distributed, I was excited to receive some of my favorite characters, including Princess Leia, Ahsoka Tano, and Asajj Ventress. Condensing characters like Leia and Luke Skywalker, while intimidating because of their importance to the saga, actually proved far simpler than the ladies from *Star Wars: The Clone Wars*. *Ultimate Star Wars* is intended to serve as a summary of the canon events from the movies and television shows. Within that scope, both Luke and Leia have relatively tight character arcs that play out over three movies. Summarizing Ahsoka proved easier than Asajj, even though Ventress did not have quite the catalogue of episode appearances. The sporadic nature of her unfolding arc created part of the challenge, but so did the fact that Asajj Ventress started as an idea in George Lucas's imagination long before she became a fascinating piece of *Clone Wars* lore.





SMALL BEGINNINGS

Star Wars has a long legacy of characters evolving from small beginnings to become impactful participants in the fabric of the saga. The most recognizable example is Boba Fett, who began to take on a life of his own with the release of his action-figure prior to the theatrical debut of *The Empire Strikes Back*. From there, the bounty hunter's tale is the stuff of legend, or rather spread across a vast portion of the Legends stories as well as playing a role in the prequel trilogy and *The Clone Wars* television show. Other background characters, such as Aurra Sing and Bossk, have earned more affection from fans than was originally imagined for them. Asajj Ventress's origin is even more humble than a character developed to populate the world-building; she started as a visual that did not make the original cut during the movie-making process.

Concept art for a menacing Sith warrior can be found in *The Art of Star Wars Episode II: Attack of the Clones*. Villainous women were championed by Iain McCaig, also known for his designs of Padmé and Queen Amidala. In the book, McCaig discusses the creation process for the *Attack of the Clones*' new Sith: "I felt this was a great opportunity to introduce a strong woman character, to give girl fans an icon." While McCaig experimented with female Sith variations like a Padmé-inspired dark queen and a medusa-like alien, Dermot Power developed a vampiric, shaven-head warrior and martial arts-inspired alien with dual blades. This was not the first time a female villain had been tossed around in the conceptual phase; a fearsome Sith witch appeared in *The Phantom Menace* concept art. The Sith witch was set aside in favor of Darth Maul, and the female Sith warriors did not

make the cut for the second prequel movie, either. McCaig admits to being disappointed by the decision to move away from the female Sith conceptualization, but as with many good ideas in *Star Wars*, these striking designs would live to see another day.

Asajj Ventress was given a name when the artwork was fleshed out into a character (no longer a Sith) as part of the *Clone Wars* multi-media project from 2002-2005, which included the *Star Wars: Clone Wars* micro-series, books, and comics. It sought to tell stories within the timeline between *Attack of the Clones* and *Revenge of the Sith*, giving depth to the events that led to the fall of the Jedi Order and the rise of the Empire. The heroes of the Republic would face off with the conquering villains in Episode III, but as they moved toward their ultimate defeat, new foes were necessary to create surmountable obstacles, affording the heroes some victories along the way.



Clockwise from right: An attempted takedown of Count Dooku; the mysterious, alluring Ventress; Ventress battles Ahsoka Tano; proving a match for Anakin Skywalker.

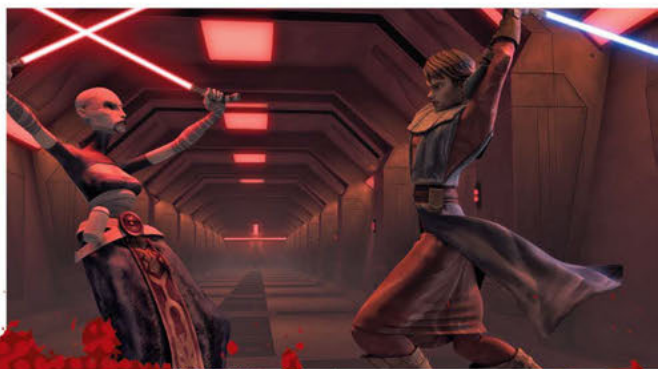
"A COLD-HEARTED HARPY"

Not every character in *Star Wars* will experience an arc, but when characters are used over an extended number of stories across multiple mediums, arcs can emerge. Asajj Ventress was a compelling presence. She had an air of mystery and danger. She duelled Jedi standouts, Anakin Skywalker and Obi-Wan Kenobi with confidence, delivering biting banter. A female warrior fighting Jedi men hinted at chemistry similar to ill-fated relationships that have arisen over the centuries in literature. While professional creators bounced Obi-Wan or Anakin against Asajj like flint to rock, fandom took those sparks and fanned the flames. While Ventress created electricity in stories from Gendy Tartakovsky's *Clone Wars* to *Jedi Trial* and *Obsession*, her personal story consisted mostly of being an adversary.

Asajj Ventress's arc started to shine during the *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* television show when writer Katie Lucas developed a fondness for the character. In an interview with ComicBook.com discussing the second trilogy of episodes she wrote for the series, Lucas revealed, "I've really fallen for Ventress, and here the audience gets to learn a lot about her history. She's an extremely complicated character." Calling Ventress a "cold-hearted harpy," Lucas set out to create a story where she finally "owns herself." With her powers growing, Ventress becomes seen as a threat to Sidious's machinations and her mentor, Count Dooku is ordered to kill her. Inspired by *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Tank Girl*,



KATIE LUCAS SET OUT TO CREATE A STORY WHERE ASAJJ VENTRESS FINALLY "OWNS HERSELF."

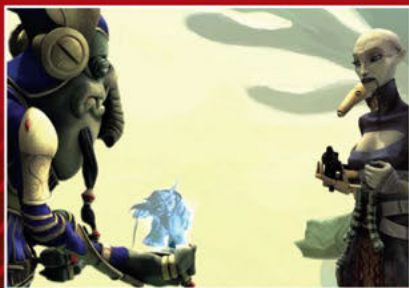


GET TO KNOW ASAJJ VENTRESS

THE FORMER SITH ACOLYTE-TURNED-BOUNTY HUNTER PLAYS KEY ROLES IN SOME OF THE MOST EXCITING EPISODES OF *STAR WARS: THE CLONE WARS*. HERE IS WHERE YOU CAN FIND HER:



"The Hidden Enemy" (Season 1, episode 16) & *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* (movie) Asajj Ventress duels Obi-Wan Kenobi and Anakin Skywalker as she sets in motion the events leading to the Battle of Christophsis, then faces off with the two Jedi again after she has kidnapped Rotta the Huttlet in a plot to turn Jabba the Hutt's forces against the Republic.



"Ambush" (Season 1, episode 1) Ventress attempts to intimidate the Toydarian King Katunko from allying with the Republic, but her efforts are thwarted by Yoda.



"Cloak of Darkness" (Season 1, episode 9) Ventress liberates Nute Gunray from Republic imprisonment, and duels Ahsoka Tano and Luminara Unduli to a stalemate in her escape.



Lucas expressed an affinity for strong female characters in several interviews. She mapped that sensibility into Ventress's storyline in *The Clone Wars*, describing the character as an expression of "visceral female rage."

Since around the turn of the century, fan academics have been extolling the influence of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* on pop culture at conventions and in scholarly writing in books like *Fan Phenomena: Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. With *Buffy* showrunner Joss Whedon now helming superhero blockbusters and writer Jane Espenson branching out to shows like the ABC hit drama *Once Upon a Time*, the relevance of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* on the direction of popular storytelling may continue to be a topic for many years to come. The long-running arcs of characters like Cordelia, Faith, Drusilla, and Glory created roadmaps for future storytellers to understand that female characters do not have to all be likeable or good in order for an audience to root for them. *Buffy* and *Tank Girl* inspired Katie Lucas to take a villain, one who could have remained a sort of pastiche of the female bad girl, and elevate her to the status of anti-heroine, a character who might do bad things, but the audience still hopes she prevails.



"ARC Troopers" (Season 3, episode 2)
While General Grievous's droid army invades Kamino to strike at the Republic's critical cloning facilities, Ventress's task is to steal the original Jango Fett genetic sample. She nearly succeeds, but Anakin stops her.

Clockwise, from right: At her most brutal; the betrayal of Captain Argus; ready for redemption? Seeing the future bounty hunter as a child made Ventress a more sympathetic character than she first appeared; a skilled warrior, Ventress is powerful enough to take on more than one Jedi.

A HERO REVEALED?

Over the course of *The Clone Wars*' run, Ventress crosses paths with a character spawned from the early Sith witch concept art, Nightsister leader Mother Talzin. A complicated history is woven between the two formative women that shapes our understanding of Ventress, who had been born a Nightsister and offered up to a criminal in order to protect the future of the matriarchal clan. In her backstory the classic elements of a hero archetype begin to appear, which might not be surprising given Katie Lucas's mentor was her father, George Lucas.

So who is Asajj Ventress? She is a Nightsister sacrificed to slavery as a child, then saved and trained by a Jedi mentor she eventually loses. Where Luke had a mentor and friends to keep his path firmly entrenched in the light side, Ventress is left alone and gives in to dark side temptations. As Sith do, Count Dooku exploits her abilities for his own gain, and the audience really gets to see glimpses of her true self as she is reborn a Nightsister. Unlike the compact arcs of the movies, *The Clone Wars* gave Asajj Ventress the chance to follow in the footsteps of Luke Skywalker, Anakin Skywalker, and even Buffy Summers; Ventress experiences multiple character journey cycles, peeling back yet more layers over the course of the television series. What we do know is that finding a family in the Nightsisters would be short-lived, and Dooku's retribution would cause Asajj to be left alone, yet again, when her clan is slaughtered by General Grievous's army.

From there, we have clues of Asajj's new path. Embarking on a life as a bounty hunter, her empathy for fugitive Jedi Ahsoka Tano leads

ASAJJ VENTRESS'S PATH THUS FAR LEADS TO A FORK IN THE ROAD.



"Nightsisters," "Monster" & "Witches of the Mist" (Season 3, episodes 12-14)
Ventress returns to her homeworld of Dathomir, reuniting with the witch leader Mother Talzin. After a failed attempt to assassinate Count Dooku, Talzin's Nightsister magicks transform Savage Opress into a fearsome warrior to mount a second strike at the Sith Lord.



"Massacre" (Season 4, episode 19)
Dooku dispatches Grievous to wipe out the Nightsister clan. Despite the witches' best efforts, Talzin and Ventress are the only survivors.

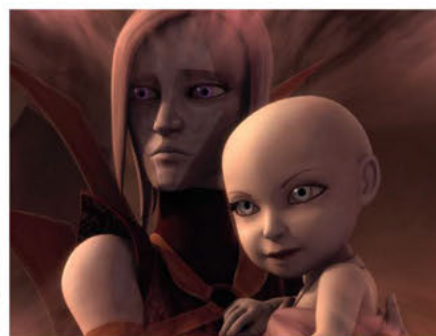


"Bounty" (Season 4, episode 20)
Following a new path as a bounty hunter, Ventress joins a crew assembled by Boba Fett to undertake a subterranean transport mission.



to a remarkable turn of events when Ventress allies with the Padawan, even offering critical information to Ventress's longtime adversary, Anakin Skywalker that helps clear Ahsoka's name. While the creative team on *The Clone Wars* had much more in store for the character, the show came to an end with a fitting heroic-arc style closure for its central character, Ahsoka Tano. At Comic-Con International: San Diego last summer, Dave Filoni revealed that Asajj's story would indeed be continued in the form of the adult novelization *Dark Disciple*, based on eight episodes written by Katie Lucas.

Asajj Ventress's path thus far leads to a fork in the road that has potential to branch in any number of ways. There could be a heroic rise or a tragic fall. Either way, *Star Wars* has done both paths exceptionally well, and it will be fascinating to see where the journey takes her, and the new shades she will cast in our collective understanding of how character arcs can create impactful stories. 🗡️



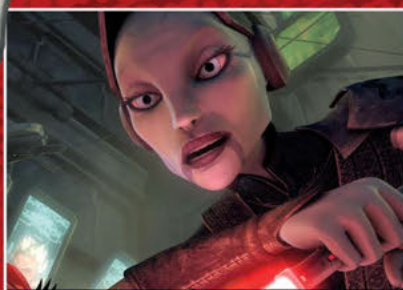
MORE TO SAY

Tricia Barr is co-author on *Ultimate Star Wars* from DK Publishing. Connect with her on Twitter @fangirlcantina.

HAVE YOU?



"Brothers" & "Revenge" (Season 4, episodes 21-22)
Maul and Opress wreak havoc in the criminal underworld. After they capture Obi-Wan, Ventress takes up the bounty posted by the Jedi Council and successfully rescues Kenobi from their clutches.

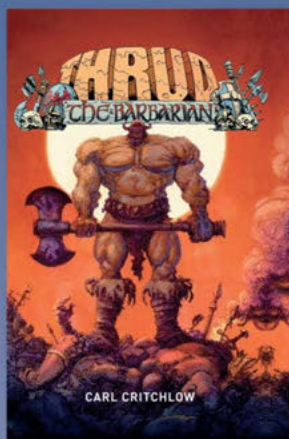


"To Catch a Jedi" & "The Wrong Jedi" (Season 5 episodes 19-20)
When Ahsoka is framed for treason, she flees into the underbelly of Coruscant. Ventress makes an unlikely ally for the fugitive Padawan, but she provides crucial clues that help Anakin clear his apprentice's name.



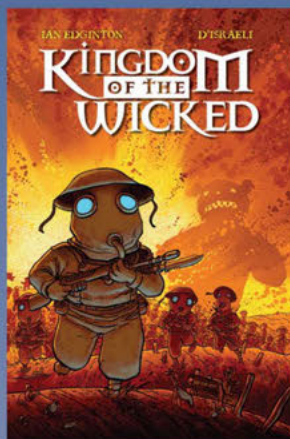
Dark Disciple (unproduced for television, released as a book)
A stunning new chapter for Asajj Ventress, proving that there is plenty of life in the sultry avenger...

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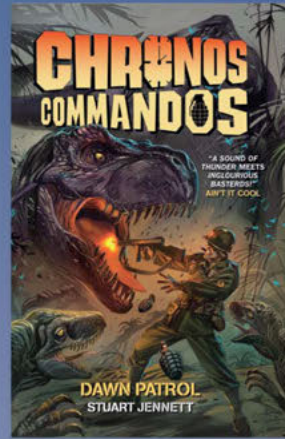
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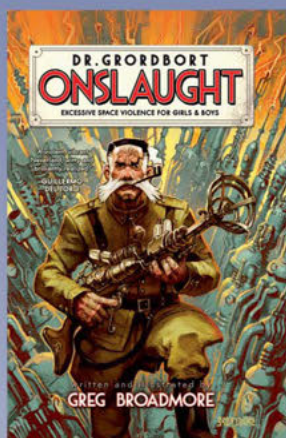
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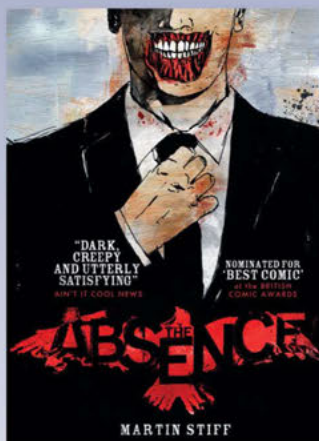
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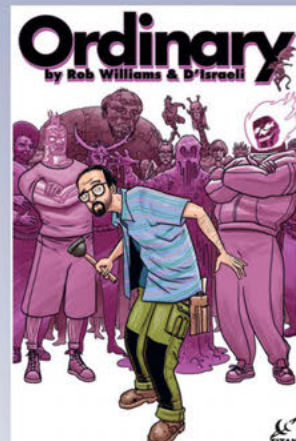
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HE'S WORTH A LOT TO ME!

WORDS: NEIL EDWARDS



WHY IT'S A CLASSIC

When he was first introduced in *The Empire Strikes Back* (after an animated appearance in the now infamous *Star Wars Holiday Special* of 1978), Boba Fett had to be one of the most mysterious *Star Wars* characters—a factor that has surely helped make him such a fan favorite over the years.

Little was known about Fett, except that he was a bounty hunter with a fearsome reputation (hence Darth Vader's admonition of, "No disintegrations!" before sending him after the *Millennium Falcon*), and was one of the few characters that could get away with talking back to Vader. Other than that, Fett was a mystery. Was he perhaps the last of a Mandalorian race killed off fighting the Empire or the Jedi Knights? Or was he a stormtrooper deserter who became a bounty hunter? Was there even a man beneath that armor, or was Fett really a droid, or a woman? Only George Lucas knew the answer, and he didn't reveal all until the release of *Attack of the Clones* in 2002.

Designed by concept artists Joe Johnston and Ralph McQuarrie, with armor built by production designer Norman Reynolds' UK art department, Boba Fett was originally screen-tested with his armor all in white as a super stormtrooper. His first public appearance in his painted armor was marching in the San Anselmo Country Fair Parade on September 24, 1978, alongside Darth Vader—he has inspired many cosplayers since.

Given this popularity, it was perhaps no surprise that the Boba Fett action figure quickly became a highly sought-after product. The first mail-away figure for *Empire* in 1979 (before the film was even released), Fett was originally advertised as coming with a rocket-firing jetpack—a feature that was re-thought at the prototype stage due to safety concerns. The few prototype versions with that feature naturally became the Holy Grail of *Star Wars* action figure-collecting. Even Fett himself would be hard pushed to track one down!

The Boba Fett that finally made it to retail may have lacked the ability to fire projectiles, but for all that, it was still a remarkably faithful reproduction of the character, arguably one of the best figure designs at that point. Weapons and accessories such as the wrist-mounted rocket and decorative, braided Wookiee scalps on his shoulder were clearly visible, confirming there was a lot more to the bounty hunter than we even saw on the screen.

The popular figure—with its mysterious markings, battle damage and trophies—encouraged kids' imaginations. Now we could all create Fett's origins and his adventures. That's the beauty of *Star Wars*—even a character who only had a handful of lines could inspire.

ESSENTIAL TRIVIA

One rocket-firing prototype Boba Fett figure sold at auction for \$16,000 in 2003, while

a still-boxed Boba Fett figure (thought to be one of only a handful in mint condition in existence in the world) sold for the impressive bounty of £18,000 (\$27,764) at a UK auction in January 2015.

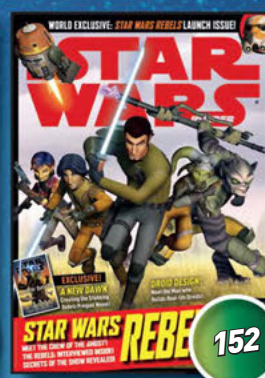
WHAT THEY SAID

"Boba Fett stayed pretty true to the original design on paper, the ones that Ralph [McQuarrie] and I had done. The character was originally a 'Supertrooper,' all in white like the stormtroopers, but George decided to make him a bounty hunter so I painted the suit up as a multi-colored, beat-up outfit. Loads of fun!" —Joe Johnston, ILM art director, co-designer of Boba Fett, interview with Yahoo! Movies, November 25, 2014

"I designed the final version of Boba Fett. Ralph and I both worked together on preliminary designs, and we traded ideas back and forth. I painted Boba's outfit and tried to make it look like it was made of different pieces of armor. It was a symmetrical design, but I painted it in such a way that it looked like he had scavenged parts and had done some personalizing of his costume; he had little trophies hanging from his belt, and he had little braids of hair, almost like a collection of scalps." —Joe Johnston, ILM art director, co-designer of Boba Fett, *Star Wars: The Annotated Screenplays*, Del Rey Books, 1997

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THE LATEST FROM THE WORLD OF *STAR WARS* PUBLISHING! WORDS: DAN WALLACE

HERE'S WHERE THE FUN BEGINS

IF YOU MISS THE "JOURNEY TO *STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS*" PUBLISHING PROGRAM, YOU'RE MISSING OUT!

Star Wars: *The Force Awakens* is coming this Christmas, but true *Star Wars* fans won't want to set a single foot inside the movie theater without first devouring the official story of what *else* happened in the galaxy far, far away. It's all part of the "Journey to *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*" program from Disney Publishing Worldwide and Lucasfilm, encompassing multiple books in both print and digital editions and written for readers of all ages.

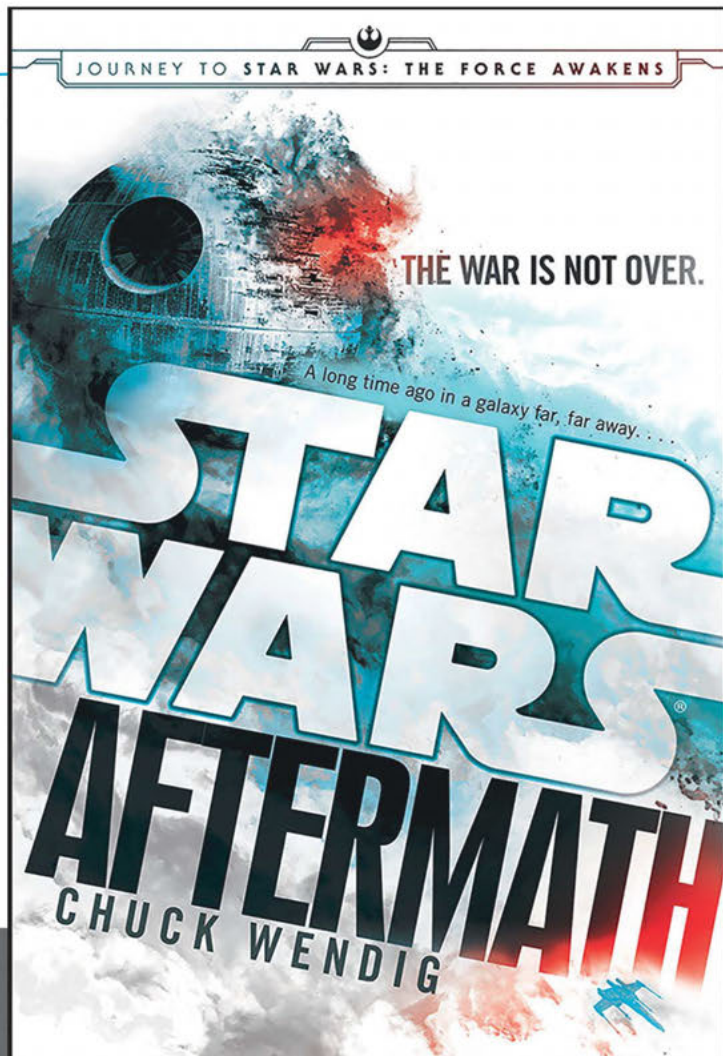
Each book in the program tells an all-new adventure featuring familiar faces and planets, while setting the scene for the new movie. There are no less than five adult and young-adult *Star Wars* novels, marking the first true opportunity for fans to dig into the stories and events that take place prior to *The Force Awakens*' opening crawl.

STAR WARS: AFTERMATH

BY CHUCK WENDIG (DEL REY)

Set immediately after the destruction of the second Death Star during *Return of the Jedi*, the novel helps establish the origins of a new Imperial government following the Empire's crushing loss at Endor. The Emperor and Darth Vader are rumored to be dead, and most of the Empire descends into chaos. While some planets celebrate and others suffer under the iron rule of Imperial factions, the Rebel Alliance





continues to fight the remnants of its old enemy. A lone rebel scout, however, uncovers a secret Imperial meeting, ushering in big changes for the future of the *Star Wars* galaxy.

"Those movies opened up a world for me," the critically-acclaimed Wendig (*Blackbirds*, *Mockingbird*, *Under the Empyrean Sky*) told *starwars.com*. "My love of storytelling comes from them and from the galaxy of smaller, connected stories, too—from the toys to the games to the books. In fact, one of the first novels I ever read was the novelization of *A New Hope*. I have a son who will, in a few short months, be my age when I saw *The Empire Strikes Back*, so to be involved with the *Star Wars* universe just as the new film is coming out—it feels like not only something akin to kismet, but a great and powerful privilege."

Aftermath is the first book of a planned trilogy. Expect future books to further fill in the three decades separating *Return of the Jedi* from *The Force Awakens*.

STAR WARS: LOST STARS

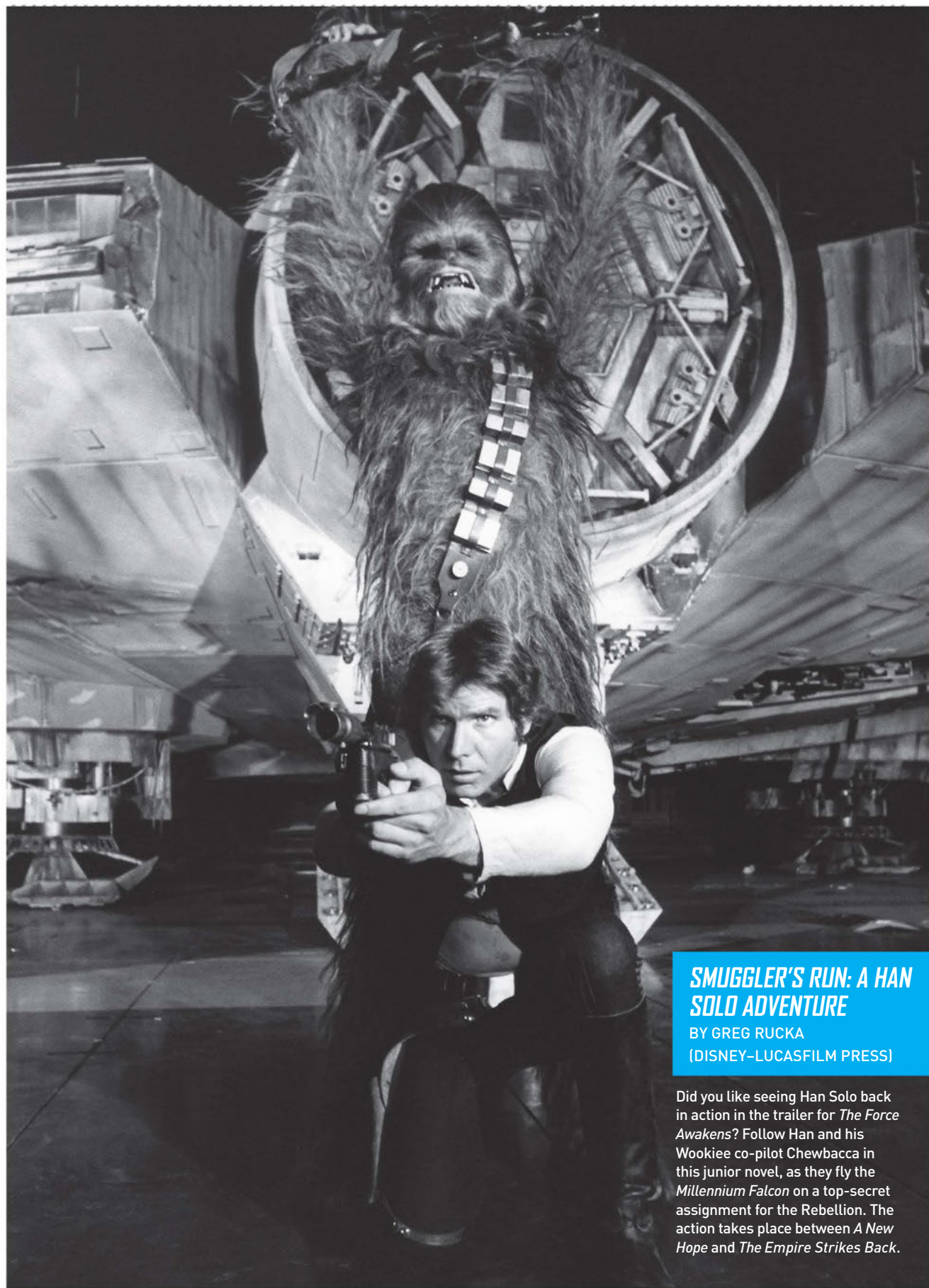
BY CLAUDIA GRAY (DISNEY-LUCASFILM PRESS)

This young adult novel is told from a unique perspective as it follows two childhood friends on paths that lead them into opposite sides of the war. Ciena Ree grows up to become an Imperial officer, while Thane Kyrell finds success as a rebel pilot. In the chaos after the Battle of Endor, their duty will keep them forever isolated—unless their love for each other can bridge the rift that is tearing the galaxy apart.

MOVING TARGET: A PRINCESS LEIA ADVENTURE

BY CECIL
CASTELLUCCI
(DISNEY-LUCASFILM
PRESS)

Princess Leia Organa takes the spotlight in this upper middle grade novel, set between the events of *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return of the Jedi*. Fans know Leia is returning in *The Force Awakens*, and in this adventure she leads a ragtag group of rebels on a dangerous mission against the Empire.



SMUGGLER'S RUN: A HAN SOLO ADVENTURE

BY GREG RUCKA
(DISNEY-LUCASFILM PRESS)

Did you like seeing Han Solo back in action in the trailer for *The Force Awakens*? Follow Han and his Wookiee co-pilot Chewbacca in this junior novel, as they fly the *Millennium Falcon* on a top-secret assignment for the Rebellion. The action takes place between *A New Hope* and *The Empire Strikes Back*.

THE WEAPON OF A JEDI: A LUKE SKYWALKER ADVENTURE

BY JASON FRY (DISNEY-LUCASFILM PRESS)

Luke Skywalker, C-3PO, and R2-D2 are stranded on a mysterious planet in this junior novel set between *A New Hope* and *The Empire Strikes Back*. Luke, still striving to follow Ben Kenobi's example and live up to his Jedi calling, faces his first-ever duel with a lightsaber.

"Journey to *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*" isn't just novels—it encompasses reference and activity books, too. *Star Wars: Absolutely Everything You Need to Know* (covered in detail in *Star Wars Insider* #158) lands on September 4. Two more books will follow as *The Force Awakens* creeps closer to its release date.

STAR WARS: SHIPS OF THE GALAXY

(STUDIOFUNK INTERNATIONAL)

Scheduled for release on September 8, this book provides details, diagrams, and facts for 15 of the best-loved starships from the *Star Wars* saga. In the back you'll find a giant 30" x 27" fold-out battle scene of Endor, and in the flaps of the fold-out are even more ships, including the X-wing fighter, the Mon Cal cruiser, and all-new ships making their debuts in *The Force Awakens*.



STAR WARS: DROID FACTORY

(STUDIO FUNK INTERNATIONAL)

Due on November 3, this book is packed with facts about the many different droids of the *Star Wars* universe, from battle droids to surgical specialists. Press-out pieces and stickers let you make your own mini models of BB-8, R2-D2, and C-3PO. And when you mount your creation onto one of the two wind-up bases included, the droid will really get moving!



AT LAST WE HAVE THE MIGHTY CHEWBACCA

WATCH A WOOKIEE WARRIOR FACE OFF AGAINST THE EMPIRE IN *STAR WARS: CHEWBACCA*

Chewbacca, the Wookiee co-pilot of Han Solo's smuggling ship *Millennium Falcon*, is one of the best-loved characters of the *Star Wars* saga—despite never once uttering a single word that audience members could understand (Chewie—unlike Jabba or Greedo—never got subtitles)! Instead, Chewbacca's fierce fighting spirit and his unshakeable, dog-like loyalty came across on screen through his expressive body language and his growling, wailing, snuffling language of Shyriiwook. All of which presents an extra layer of challenges for a Chewbacca-centric comic book, but it's a mission that writer, Gerry Duggan (*Deadpool*, *1872*, *Hulk*) was enormously eager to accept.

Star Wars: Chewbacca, coming on the heels of the miniseries *Star Wars: Lando*, is an all-new, limited-run adventure starring the resourceful Wookiee who has sometimes been mistaken for a walking carpet. Duggan promises that even if Chewie isn't delivering lines, his voice will come through loud and clear.

"While writing for Chewbacca, I needed to be very clear for our editors and my collaborator," Duggan says. "My first script was pretty dense in my descriptions and in explaining Chewie's intentions, but a note from the team at Lucasfilm suggested that I parenthetically translate each Wookiee line. So each Chewie roar is actually two lines in the script."

Even though readers won't get to read the translated versions of Chewie's sentences, the act of writing out the dialogue allowed Duggan to get into Chewbacca's head and provide the motivations behind his actions. For the Shyriiwook lines, Duggan even needed to spell out the rumbling wails. "It's funny, because unlike the scripts for feature films or video games, comic scripts need to very clearly lay out the spelling," he says. "So I had to spell out Chewie's roars for the letterer."

Star Wars: Chewbacca is set after the destruction of the first Death Star,

and things kick into gear when Chewie crash-lands on a hostile, Imperial-occupied planet. It is there that Chewbacca discovers that he's not the only one in danger. "He's on an important personal mission when we first meet him, and he's quickly caught up in the plight of his hosts," explains Duggan. "He makes the choice to stay, and these people are very lucky he does."

Zarro, a young and feisty girl in need, is among those who make a temporary alliance with the stranded Wookiee. "Zarro and her family are in trouble with a local warlord who is enticing the Empire to the planet," says Duggan. "With or without Chewie, Zarro is moving ahead with her own mini-rebellion. That's the reason that he decides to stay. Zarro is a new character, but she's not a damsel in distress. I would describe her more as a hero in over her head."

Phil Noto (*Black Widow*, *X-23*, *Uncanny X-Force*) brings his considerable talents as the illustrator of the miniseries. "This is the second comic I've had the chance to collaborate on with Phil," says Duggan. "He's been a great friend over the years, and he's one of the collaborators I owe my career to. His talent is as limitless as his love for *Star Wars*. He would be mad at me for even thinking this, but I hold him in the same regard as [*Star Wars* poster artist] Drew Struzan—he's that good. Wait until you get a peek at the work he's creating for *Chewbacca*. Once again, he's outdone himself." Duggan claims to be a big Chewbacca fan, but how big a fan is he exactly? According to Duggan, big enough that he was tempted to commit professional blackmail to secure the gig once he learned that Marvel had acquired the *Star Wars* license. "I withheld my *Deadpool* scripts until editor Jordan D. White had no choice but to invite me to play in a galaxy far, far away," he jokes. "I'm flattered to be invited to participate in this *Star Wars* comic renaissance. And on a personal note, my son is now the perfect age to enjoy all the great things that are happening in the comics and the films."

Need more proof of Duggan's devotion? As a kid in 1978, he dressed up as Chewbacca for Halloween (his sister dressed as Darth Vader). "My love runs deep!" he admits. "But it's been great fun for me. I have all the love in the world for Chewie."

The first issue of *Star Wars: Chewbacca* is expected to land in comic stores and on digital outlets this October.

COMING UP!



Star Wars: Shattered Empire, part of the Journey to *The Force Awakens* publishing program, begins in September. Written by Greg Rucka and illustrated by Marco Checchetto. The comic book mini-series will help tell the story of what happened following the collapse of the Empire. Here's Checchetto's variant cover to issue #1.

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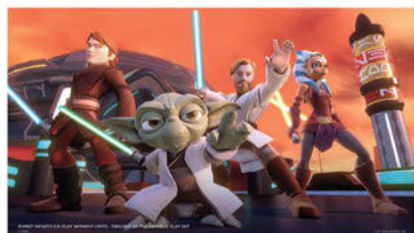
Star Wars: Chewbacca variant cover art by Phil Noto



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THE LATEST *STAR WARS* GEAR YOU'LL WANT TO ADD TO YOUR COLLECTION! WORDS: JAMES BURNS

DISNEY INTERACTIVE //////////////////////////////////////



DISNEY INFINITY 3.0 – *STAR WARS: TWILIGHT OF THE REPUBLIC* PLAYSET

Star Wars: Twilight of the Republic is the first of three *Star Wars* playsets to be released later this year for Disney Infinity 3.0: Play Without Limits. Developed by Ninja Theory, in partnership with Avalanche Software, the game will deliver an authentic family-friendly *Star Wars* experience with enhanced combat system. *Star Wars: Twilight of the Republic* is set during the latter years of the Clone Wars;

players will travel to four locations and can explore the open worlds of Tatooine and Coruscant, battle droids on Geonosis, and partake in an epic boss battle on Naboo. Along the way, players will use the Force and master their lightsaber skills as they fight alongside Ahsoka Tano, Anakin Skywalker, Obi-Wan Kenobi, and Yoda to save the Republic and defeat the Separatists.

The *Star Wars: Twilight of the Republic* playset is included in the Disney Infinity 3.0 starter pack, which also includes the Disney

Infinity 3.0 base, Ahsoka Tano and Anakin Skywalker collectible character figures, and a web code card that unlocks content for PC and mobile devices. Other collectible character figures coming this fall include Darth Maul, Obi-Wan Kenobi, and Yoda.

Two additional *Star Wars* playsets will be available for Disney Infinity 3.0 this holiday season, including *Star Wars: Rise Against the Empire* and *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*. Available: Fall 2015 for PC, Sony PS4, Sony PS3, Xbox One, Xbox 360 and Nintendo Wii U

GENTLE GIANT

STAR WARS: DROIDS – R2-D2 AND BOBA FETT JUMBO FIGURES (INDIVIDUALLY PACKED)

Some of the last action figures to come from *Star Wars* in the 1980s were from the animated TV show *Star Wars: Droids*. Only one wave of figures were released, which included R2-D2, an A-wing pilot, Boba Fett, Jann Tosh, Jord Dusat, Kea Moll, Kez-Iban, C-3PO, Sise Fromm, Thall Joben, Tig Fromm, Uncle Gundy, and Vlix (only released in Brazil).

Gentle Giant has revisited some of these Kenner action figures and has digitally scanned them from mint 3 3/4-inch Kenner originals, reproducing them in 12-inch scale, ensuring no detail has been overlooked. Following the release of C-3PO at *Star Wars* Celebration Anaheim, Gentle Giant brings us two more figures from *Star Wars: Droids* as Comic-Con International: San Diego exclusives. To stand aside C-3PO, we get R2-D2 with pop-up lightsaber, as well as infamous bounty hunter Boba Fett. Each comes complete with a jumbo replica of the coin that came with the original figure on a vintage-inspired backing card, featuring original photos and artwork. Designed with the collector in mind, each figure comes in a re-sealable plastic outer clam shell to help protect and display this limited edition figure.

Available: Q3 2015



PROTOTYPE BOBA FETT MINI BUST

In 1978, early concept art from Ralph McQuarrie and Joe Johnston showed notorious bounty hunter Boba Fett in all-white armor. Later that year, *Star Wars* sound designer Ben Burtt and *Empire Strikes Back* assistant film editor Duwayne Dunham filmed a test detailing its weaponry and functionality; the colors would later be developed by Johnston to what has become Fett's definitive look.

Gentle Giant Ltd. is proud to bring you the prototype version of Boba Fett in Mini Bust form. Digitally sculpted by master artisans, using actual archival footage and designs, Fett has been rendered using the highest quality polystone, and hand-painted. Each piece comes individually numbered and is paired with a matching certificate of authenticity.

Available: Q3 2015

3DLIGHTFX

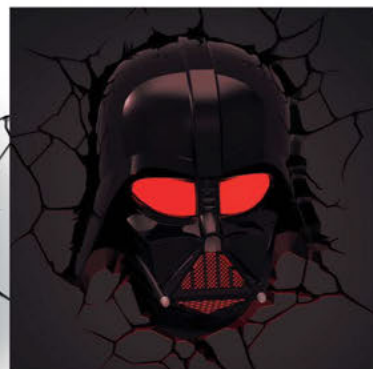


3DLightFX brings *Star Wars* characters Darth Vader, Boba Fett and Yoda to life as 3D LED battery operated nightlights. Each light, which comes with a remote control and 20-minute timer function, looks great as a wall decoration when switched off, but comes to life when illuminated.

These easy-to-install, cordless, battery operated lights use LED bulbs, which mean they never get hot. Ideal for kids young and old, each light comes with a fun wall sticker to make it appear as if the character is breaking through the wall, making them the perfect addition to give a room character and originality.

Available: Now

Price: \$39.95



FANTASY FLIGHT GAMES



STAR WARS: ARMADA IMPERIAL-CLASS STAR DESTROYER EXPANSION PACK

At the height of the Galactic Civil War, the *Imperial-class* Star Destroyer was the commanding cornerstone of the Imperial Navy, boasting enough firepower to bring wayward systems to heel under Imperial rule. The *Imperial-class* Star Destroyer Expansion Pack brings this behemoth battleship to your games of *Star Wars: Armada* with one pre-painted miniature, two ship cards, three command dials, 18 upgrades, and all requisite tokens. Additionally, its upgrades allow you to snare your foes with a tractor beam, and fly your fleet to battle under the command of Darth Vader.

Available: Late Summer 2015
Price: \$49.95



STAR WARS: ARMADA MC30C FRIGATE EXPANSION PACK

One of the most powerful mid-level ships in the Galactic Civil War, the MC30c frigate presented a lethal combination of speed, high-powered armament, and advanced deflector shields. Now, this fast and nimble rebel ship arrives to *Star Wars: Armada* as a small-size vessel that can fire as many as five attack dice from its left and right hull zones. You'll also find two command dials, ten upgrade cards, and all the tokens you need to defeat your enemies!

Available: Late Summer 2015
Price: \$29.95



STAR WARS: ARMADA HOME ONE EXPANSION PACK

Admiral Ackbar and his flagship star cruiser, *Home One*, arrive to *Star Wars: Armada* in the *Home One* Expansion Pack! Featuring one large-size, pre-painted miniature MC80 star cruiser, two ship cards, three command dials, and 14 upgrades, the *Home One* Expansion Pack gives the Rebel Alliance a ship that boasts battery armaments of six dice from both its left and right hull zones, making it capable of trading blow for blow with nearly any Imperial vessel and empowering a whole new set of tactics that you can employ in your battles for galactic freedom!

Available: Late Summer 2015
Price: \$39.95



STAR WARS: ARMADA ROGUES AND VILLAINS EXPANSION PACK

Han Solo, Boba Fett, and a handful of the galaxy's most notorious rogues and villains race to the battlefield in the Rogues and Villains Expansion Pack for *Star Wars: Armada*!

You'll find eight irregular squadrons, including some of the *Star Wars* galaxy's most recognizable freighters, patrol craft, and bombers, each of which can be represented in your games by either a non-unique squadron card or flown by an ace. Like the squadrons from the Core Set and the first wave of expansions, these come unpainted, but are presented in colors that complement their fleets.

Available: Late Summer 2015
Price: \$19.95



STAR WARS: ARMADA IMPERIAL RAIDER EXPANSION PACK

The *Raider*-class corvette is the Empire's response to the need for a designated anti-fighter vessel. The Imperial Raider Expansion Pack brings this ship's six, accurate, dual heavy laser cannons to *Star Wars: Armada*, where its utility against snub-fighters and the disruptive effects of its ion cannon emplacements, along with the efficiency of its localized command, make it a powerful addition to any Imperial fleet. In addition to its pre-painted, small-base Raider miniature, this expansion introduces eight upgrade cards, a command dial, speed dial, and all requisite tokens.

Available: Late Summer 2015

Price: \$19.95

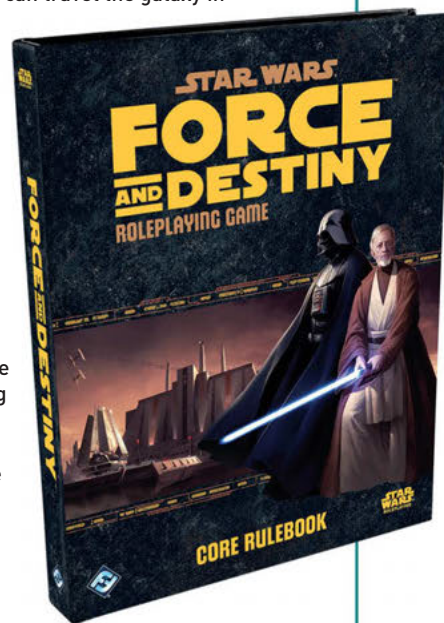
STAR WARS: FORCE AND DESTINY RPG CORE RULEBOOK

Use the full power of the Force in the epic adventures of the Force and Destiny roleplaying game! You can travel the galaxy in search of ancient Jedi knowledge, protect the downtrodden on your home planet, or pilot a starship for the Rebellion. Whatever your path, the Force and Destiny Core Rulebook contains all the information players and Game Masters need to launch a roleplaying campaign set in the *Star Wars* universe.

The beautifully illustrated, 448-page Core Rulebook details everything from using the narrative dice system in combat and creating Force-sensitive characters, to the mythology of the Jedi Order and locations inside Sith space. It is the fundamental book and launching point for any Force and Destiny campaign.

Available: Late Summer 2015

Price: \$59.95



PLASTICOLOR

PlastiColor has been a leader in licensed automotive accessories for over 40 years. Although PlastiColor began as a floor mat manufacturer, they also now produce many other automotive products, many of which are available with a *Star Wars* twist!

The new range of *Star Wars* products launched at Comic-Con International: San Diego and includes: Darth Vader Red Floor Mat (\$39.99), Darth Vader Red Utility Mat (\$14.99), Endor Utility Mat (\$29.99), Mos Eisley Utility Mat (\$29.99), Planet Hoth Utility Mat (\$29.99), Death Star Utility Mat (\$19.99), Empire Logo Utility Mat (\$29.99), Mandalorian Utility Mat (\$29.99), Rebel Logo Utility Mat (\$29.99), Boba Fett Lanyard (\$4.99), Empire Logo Lanyard (\$4.99) and Rebel Logo Lanyard (\$4.99).

Available: Now

Price: from \$4.99 to \$39.99



LEGO

LEGO STAR WARS IMPERIAL ASSAULT CARRIER

It's the second half of the year, which means it's time for more new LEGO Star Wars sets! Amongst the five new sets available is the Imperial Assault Carrier which features in *Star Wars Rebels*. With a built-in lifting handle, the Imperial Assault Carrier transports TIE fighters into battle. It also features twin spring-loaded shooters and a rotating gun turret with duel stud blaster, as well as four mini-scale TIE fighters that can each be deployed separately. There are also five minifigures and their weapons, including Agent Kallus, an Imperial officer, Sabine Wren in Mandalorian outfit with helmet, two TIE pilots, and an Imperial astromech droid.

Available: Now

Price: \$129.99 (Pieces 1,216; Ages 9- 14)



COMIC-CON INTERNATIONAL: SAN DIEGO

FUNKO

FUNKO POP! VINYL BOBBLE HEADS – C-3PO AND PRINCESS LEIA AS BOUSHH

Inspired by designer toys and stylized character collectibles the world over, Funko continues its line of four-inch tall Pop! Vinyl bobble heads with two Comic-Con International: San Diego exclusives.

Limited to 1,000 pieces each, there's the chromed version of everybody's favorite protocol droid, C-3PO, or Princess Leia as bounty hunter Boushh—without her helmet.

Available: Now

Price: \$15 each



HIKARI INFRARED BOBA FETT

Hikari, meaning "light," is a highly collectible line of clear *Sofubi* Vinyl Figures from Funko. The Hikari Infrared Boba Fett is an exclusive limited to 1,000 pieces, stands at eight inches high and is sure to be very popular. These ultra-limited pieces come with a hand-numbered card to prove authenticity.

Available: Now

Price: \$80 each



HALLMARK

U-3PO AND R5-D4

Hallmark releases a new Keepsake Ornament two-pack as a Comic-Con event exclusive for 2015, featuring droids that first appeared in *Star Wars: A New Hope*. The humanoid protocol droid U-3PO served aboard Princess Leia's consular ship while the astromech droid R5-D4

was offered for sale by Jawa traders to moisture farmer Owen Lars on Tatooine.

Available: Comic-Con

International: San Diego

and New York Comic-Con

Price: \$35.00 – limited to 250 units per day



BOBA FETT AND HAN SOLO IN CARBONITE

The fun and popular line of Hallmark itty bittys continues with this exclusive 2015 Comic-Con two-pack, featuring the armored bounty hunter, Boba Fett and his prisoner, Han Solo as seen in *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back*.

Available: Comic-Con

International: San

Diego and New York

Comic Con

Price: \$20.00 –

limited to 300 units per day



LEGO STAR WARS DEATH STAR FINAL DUEL

For original trilogy fans, re-enact the epic final duel between Luke Skywalker, Darth Vader, and Emperor Palpatine from *Return of the Jedi* with the amazing LEGO *Star Wars* re-creation of the Emperor's throne room. Packed with loads of great play features including swing-out side-sections for easy play, opening entrance doors, a new Force jump function, collapsing stairs and bridge, reactor shaft, and detachable throne section with rotating throne and hidden Lightsaber pop-up function—this is a fantastic set that will delight all. Luke Skywalker, Darth Vader, Emperor Palpatine and two royal guards are included, all with their respective weapons.

Available: Now



EXCLUSIVES!

SANTA CRUZ

Santa Cruz Skateboards released the next round of its exclusive edition of decks especially for Comic Con International: San Diego. Each board design features a classic character from the original trilogy with new colorways of Darth Vader and Boba Fett, an exclusive new Tusken Raider graphic, and finally, an exclusive full-color version of the R2-D2 board, previously only available as a wood inlay. Get on your boards and ride!

Available: Now



JAKKS PACIFIC

How do you top last year's exclusive Shadow Stormtrooper 31-inch figure that sold out at Comic-Con International: San Diego in record time? JAKKS' answer is to make two new exclusives for the 2015 show....



FIRST APPEARANCE BOBA FETT

This 20-inch high, articulated, first-appearance Boba Fett is based on his first public showing as a member of the *Star Wars* delegation in the San Anselmo Country Fair on September 24, 1978, as he marched through the streets alongside Darth Vader. The armor was worn by assistant film editor Duwayne Dunham and featured several noticeable differences, such as the brightly colored blue jump suit, yellow and red armor highlights, and the "tribal marks" on his helmet, all altered for his later film appearances.

Available: Now

Price: \$50.00

HOLOGRAM DARTH VADER

Hologram Darth Vader features seven points of articulation and collector level deco to help recreate the hologram effect of Vader's infamous command. If that wasn't enough, Vader lights up with a simple button activation thanks to LEDs behind and below the figure in package. At 20 inches tall, this JAKKS Big Fig is the first time a Hologram Vader figure is "in scale" with the size of the actual "hologram" from *The Empire Strikes Back!* Now you can pose Vader on your desk, and let him give you orders just like he did in the film.

Available: Now

Price: \$60.00

BOUNTY HUNTERS



MEET THE STARS, SHOW THE EVIDENCE, WIN THE BOUNTY! *STAR WARS INSIDER*'S BOUNTY HUNTERS SECTION IS SPONSORED BY KOTOBUKIYA. EACH ISSUE'S WINNER WILL RECEIVE A FANTASTIC KOTOBUKIYA *STAR WARS* STATUE KIT! VISIT WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/KOTOBUKIYA TO SEE MORE!

CRAFTSMANSHIP
KOTOBUKIYA

BOUNTY WINNER!

A GLIMPSE INTO THE FUTURE!

A long time ago on the west coast of America, *Star Wars* Celebration IV happened in Los Angeles. My dad, my brother-in-law, several friends, and myself flew from Alabama to experience the fun. Little did we know we would brush shoulders with a future *Star Wars* director. Hot off the announcement that he was directing *Star Trek*, J.J. Abrams was attending CIV with his sons. My brother-in-law and myself were able to take a couple of quick pictures with him. As a lifelong *Star Wars* fan, this picture ended up being something more amazing than I could have ever imagined. We are all lucky to have such a huge *Star Wars* fan as J.J. Abrams directing *The Force Awakens*!—Michael Nipp, by email



Michael's brother-in-law, Matt, watches as J.J. looks at some figure sculptures!



Star Wars: The Force Awakens
J.J. Abrams meets Michael!

THE FRIENDLIEST WOOKIEE!

My son and I attended our first *Star Wars* Weekends last year at Disney World. We had a fantastic time, and to top it all off we even got to meet Chewbacca himself, Peter Mayhew!

We're really looking forward to attending again this year and meeting some more *Star Wars* celebrities.—David Glading, by email



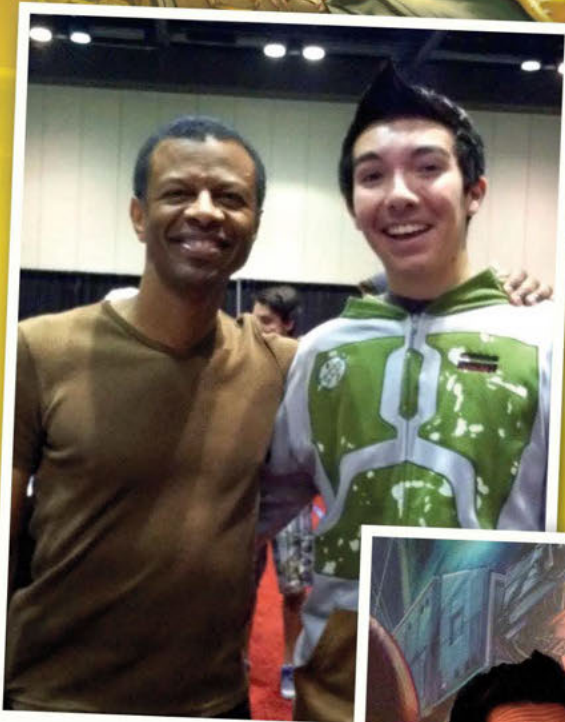
David and son meet the mighty Chewbacca, AKA Peter Mayhew!

GREAT NATE!

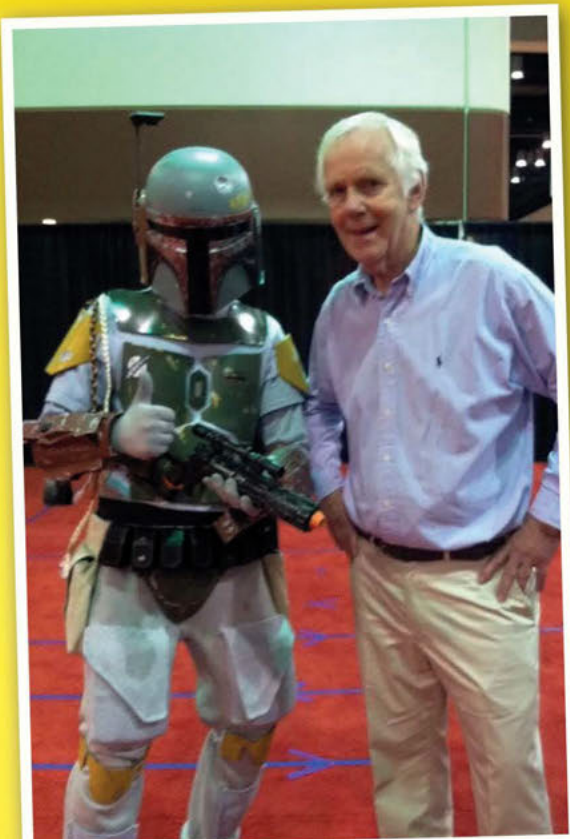
I've met quite a few *Star Wars* celebrities. Living in the Florida heat certainly pays off! I've met my hero, Jeremy Bulloch, many times. My favorite encounter with him was when I was wearing my homemade Boba Fett costume. This was at Celebration VI.

Just last year, at MegaCon here in Orlando, I met one of my favorite voice actors ever: Phil LaMarr, the voice of Kit Fisto and Bail Organa on *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* and *Star Wars Rebels*!

Just last week at Disney's Hollywood Studios' *Star Wars* Weekends, I waited in line all night, so I could meet the one, the only Steve Blum—the voice of Zeb on *Star Wars Rebels*! All three of them are the nicest guys ever! I'm so glad I got to meet them!—Nate Elliot, Florida, USA



Phil LaMarr catches up with Nate!



"Don't I know you?" Nate meets Jeremy Bulloch!



Say, "Arrrgh!" Nate and Steve Blum enjoy a mighty good growl together!

CALLING ALL BOUNTY HUNTERS!

WE WANT THE PHOTOS OF YOUR ENCOUNTERS WITH STAR WARS STARS!

Have you met a *Star Wars* star at Celebration or *Star Wars* Weekends? We want your photos! Please send your photos and you could be rewarded with an amazing Kotobukiya *Star Wars* statue! What have you got to lose? Write in to the address on page 3 with your photos and tell us all about your celebrity encounter!



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BANTHA TRACKS

BY THE FANS
FOR THE FANS

GIVING BACK

As the anticipatory bliss of *Star Wars* Celebration begins to give way to a second wave of excitement surrounding a just-announced *The Force Awakens* panel at Comic-Con International: San Diego (which will likely have already transpired by the time this column goes to print), I wanted to send a shout-out to some new friends I recently made in the Rebel Legion and the 501st, two well-established fan costuming groups devoted to bringing the characters of the *Star Wars* saga to our galaxy.

First, I was honored to be introduced and welcomed to the Rebel Legion's first ever benefit dinner at Celebration Anaheim, a sold-out event that raised over \$8,000 for children's charity, Variety. Through a series of raffles and auctions for items donated by club members, celebrities, and Variety, guests and bidders could win a *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* crew jacket, several signed X-wing helmets, a Chewbacca messenger

bag signed by actor Peter Mayhew, and a *Star Wars* pin mold from Variety, among other gems.

The brainchild of three Rebels—Rick Chinn from Hoth Base in Australia and both Suzi Stelling and Roman Bela from Elstree Base in the United Kingdom—the charity dinner hosted 300 people who packed the dining hall, including Peter Mayhew, Boba Fett actor Jeremy Bulloch, and Lee Towersey, one of the fans from the R2-D2 Builder's Club who constructed an R2-D2 for *The Force Awakens*. By all accounts, the evening was a big success, and just one more brilliant example of the incredible generosity, compassion, and dedication of our amazing *Star Wars* fan community.

Those three attributes were also recently on full display with 501st Legion member Kevin Doyle, who happened to drop into Lucasfilm's headquarters in San Francisco while taking a walk—a long walk—to Comic-Con International: San Diego! For those unfamiliar with

California's coastline, those two points are separated by over 500 miles (501, to be exact). Kevin's journey physically began at Rancho Obi-Wan located in San Francisco's North Bay, but emotionally it started with the passing of his beloved wife, Eileen, who sadly lost her battle with cancer nearly three years ago. Kevin resolved to honor her memory by walking in his TK-172 stormtrooper armor (Eileen was also a member of the 501st) from San Francisco to San Diego...

And back.

The first half of the 1,000 mile journey will take over a month, from June 6th to July 9th, and will be in honor of his wife. The second half, Kevin explains, is for him. "It's for me to heal," he says. As one of many fans who I'm sure would like to join him in spirit, we wish you safe travels, Kevin, and may the Force be with you.

Pete Vilmur, Editor, *Bantha Tracks*



Rebel Legion members Rick Chinn and Roman Bela flank "Dak" actor John Morton, who signed one of the donated X-wing helmets auctioned off at the Rebel Legion Charity Dinner.

A one-of-a-kind *Star Wars* heart pins mold donated by Variety for the charity dinner auction.



Kevin Doyle pushes his 100-plus pound cart (containing supplies for his thousand-mile journey) across the Golden Gate Bridge toward Lucasfilm headquarters in San Francisco. He says the helmet only goes on for special moments during the trip, such as crossing a landmark bridge.



501st member Kevin Doyle (TK-172) stops by the Yoda Fountain in front of Lucasfilm headquarters after walking 40 miles from Rancho Obi-Wan in San Francisco's North Bay. Just 960 miles left to go!



Collector Chris Salton stands alongside a few pieces from his vast *Star Wars* collection, which he's been building since he was six. "I love that *Star Wars* is growing so much, and with the new movies on the way and a hit TV show, I'm very proud to say the Force is strong with us," he says. We'll agree with you on that, Chris!





← "The Skywalker twins made us miss our plane... and it was totally worth it," read the email this Celebration image was attached to from Guy Davis of Plano, Texas. Like many families, Guy's is a cross-generational family in their love of *Star Wars*—he saw the original in 1977, and his son, Grant remembers the Special Editions in 1997 as his earliest *Star Wars* memory.



Let the Wookiees win! Members from the the Great Lakes Base of the Rebel Legion, including all three Wookiees: Marcus Gau (Tarfful), Chris Blackstock (Chewbacca), and Jamie Arielle (Gungli), were recently presented with medals at the Arnold Fencing Classic in Columbus, Ohio. The identity of the Boushh costumer remains safely anonymous.

BANTHA TRACKS: BY THE FANS FOR THE FANS



↑ This tattoo art of a Dia de los Muertos-inspired Princess Leia, by Vancouver artist Stephen Shaw, includes some cryptic coordinates that aren't to the Rebel base, but a more earthbound *Star Wars*-friendly location. Can you guess where? (Hint: If you went to the recent *Star Wars* Celebration, you *probably* stopped by!)





SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Any original art, envelope art, comics, illustrations, news, stories, meeting information, or any materials voluntarily submitted become the property of *Bantha Tracks*. No compensation will be given for voluntary submissions, and there is no guarantee of publication. Submissions to *Bantha Tracks* will not be returned. Each submission must include the creator's name, age, contact details, date the work was created, and a statement that the work is original, and created by the person submitting it.

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banthatracks@starwars.com,
 or send your snail mail to:
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↑ Tracy Doering (aka "Sabe Sprocket" and "Hot Nerd Girl") is one of the newest members of *Star Wars* Steampunk Universe, a costuming group who fans may have met at the "Steampunk *Star Wars*" panel at Celebration Anaheim. I caught up with Chris "Dude Vader" Canole, Raina "Steamy Leia" Schmolesky, Shaylor "Baron Von Maul" Duranleau, Nathan "Captain Solo" Seekerman, Michael "Luke Steamwalker" Ward, and James and Noah Graham (father and son, Lando and Chance Chronos) at the Celebration cantina for some, ahem, *steamed* blue milk. (Photos by Kansas Johnson)

RED FIVE

ADAM BRAY'S FIVE FAVORITE STAR WARS FACTS

FRESH FROM CONTRIBUTING TO DK'S ULTIMATE STAR WARS BOOK, ADAM BRAY HAS ALSO CO-AUTHORED THE FORTHCOMING STAR WARS: ABSOLUTELY EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW. HERE ARE FIVE FACTS SURE TO DAZZLE YOUR FRIENDS!



1

COUNT DOOKU, ZIRO THE HUTT, AND CADE BANE ARE ALL VOICED BY THE SAME ACTOR

It still amazes me that Count Dooku, Ziro the Hutt, and Cade Bane (as well as many background characters) are all voiced by actor Corey Burton. The voices of these villainous *Star Wars*: *The Clone Wars* characters—who are among my favorites—all sound entirely different from each other! The talented Burton has had a distinguished career. His television work includes the voices of both Toadwort and Gruffy Gummi in *The Gummi Bears*, Dracula in Marvel's *Avengers Assemble* as well as *Ultimate Spider-Man*, and Captain Hook in *Jake and the Never Land Pirates*! He has voiced minor characters in major Disney animated features, too, including *Aladdin* (1992), *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1996), and *Atlantis: The Lost Empire* (2001). He even recorded a line for rebel pilot Derek "Hobbie" Klivian in *The Empire Strikes Back*!

2

ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL CRIME LORDS IN THE GALAXY IS FEMALE

My favorite scoundrels in the *Star Wars* universe are the Hutts. Their gluttony, completely disloyal self-interest, and twistedly dark sense of humor all make them wonderful characters for storytelling. The *Clone Wars* has given us so many great villains and lots of strong female characters, but among the most over-looked in the female category is Gardulla the Hutt. The Hutt Grand Council is controlled by the heads of the five ruling clans: Gorga, Oruba, Arok, Marlo, and Jabba. But it is gambler and slaver Gardulla who governs the council as Jabba's representative, while he remains on Tatooine. She is the one-time owner of Anakin and Shmi Skywalker, and a temporary captor of Ziro the Hutt. She's a sly gangster you should never turn your back on!



3

KENNER'S VINTAGE CANTINA ACTION FIGURES ARE ALL NOW CANON... SORT OF!



Among Kenner's earliest *Star Wars* action figures was a group of five aliens attributed to the Cantina scene in *A New Hope*. They included "Hammerhead" (since re-named Momaw Nadon), a red "Snaggletooth" (Zutton), a Blue "Snaggletooth" (a rare Sears exclusive), "Walrus Man" (Ponda Baba), and Greedo. Though much loved by fans and collectors, these figures were highly stylized and bore questionable resemblance to their on-screen counterparts. Fortunately for fandom, supervising director Dave Filoni is a fan of these figures as well, and brought them into canon via *Clone Wars*.

We first see a blue-and-orange-suited Walrus Man on the planet Abafar in season

five's "Missing in Action." We find a blue Snaggletooth in season five's "Revival," and a more loosely inspired red Snaggletooth, named Katt Mol, in season four's "Padawan Lost." We first encounter a Kenner version of Hammerhead in the premier of *Star Wars Rebels*.

At the recent Celebration Anaheim, Dave Filoni finally revealed an unfinished scene from *Clone Wars* that included not only a Kenner-styled Walrus Man and Hammerhead, but also a blue Snaggletooth riding in a speeder with a green jump-suited Rodian who closely resembles the original Greedo action figure.

4

BOTH ANAKIN AND LUKE DISOBEY THEIR JEDI MASTERS TO SAVE SOMEONE, BUT THE CHOICES LEAD IN OPPOSITE DIRECTIONS



In *Revenge of the Sith*, Anakin Skywalker tries to save Padmé from dying in childbirth. His choice, however, is made out of selfishness, out of fear and greed. He is willing to sacrifice everyone else around him in order to satisfy his own desire. His choice mirrors that of his son, Luke, who later seeks to save Anakin. In contrast, however, Luke's sacrifice is selfless. Luke is willing to die for Anakin (Vader), and even to fail in the process.

Not only did Anakin turn his back on the Jedi teachings with his choice, but likewise Luke disregards the instructions of Obi-Wan and Yoda when he refuses to

destroy his father. Though they both try to save someone close to them, the motivation behind their mirrored choices leads down two different paths—Anakin to darkness and Luke to the light.

Luke's willingness to sacrifice himself for Anakin is the key, and awakens in Darth Vader the opportunity to reboot his original choice. In his youth, Anakin decided to join Palpatine as the Sith electrocuted the Jedi Mace Windu. But now, as Palpatine grips his Jedi son Luke in the thralls of that same Force Lightning, Vader chooses self-sacrifice and love.



5

C-3PO BARES HIS SOUL IN THE PREQUELS

C-3PO is the only character to appear in all six (soon to be seven) *Star Wars* films. In Episode I we do actually see beneath C-3PO's outer casing, but otherwise, Anthony Daniels, the actor who breathed life into the droid, nearly spent his entire *Star Wars* career hidden behind C-3PO's golden mask. However, in Episodes II and III Daniels had an opportunity to play Dannl Faytonni, a background character on Coruscant. In both films, we finally see Daniels' face on screen for the first time.

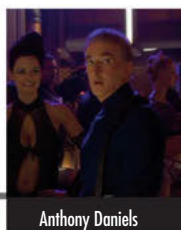
Daniels isn't the only actor unmasked in the

Star Wars saga. Warwick Davis, who plays Wicket, as well as the Rodian Wald, shows his true face during the podrace in Episode I, as the gambler Weazel. Actor Ray Park, legendary for his role as Darth Maul, also appears toward the end of *The Phantom Menace*, sans makeup and horns, as a Naboo soldier. Ahmed Best (Jar Jar) appears in the flesh as Achk Med-Beg in Episode II. Finally, Jeremy Bulloch (Boba Fett) appears as pilot Jeremoch Colton in *Revenge of the Sith*, and Lieutenant Shekil in *The Empire Strikes Back*.

MORE TO SAY

Star Wars: Absolutely Everything You Need to Know is available now!

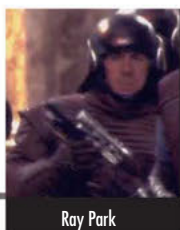
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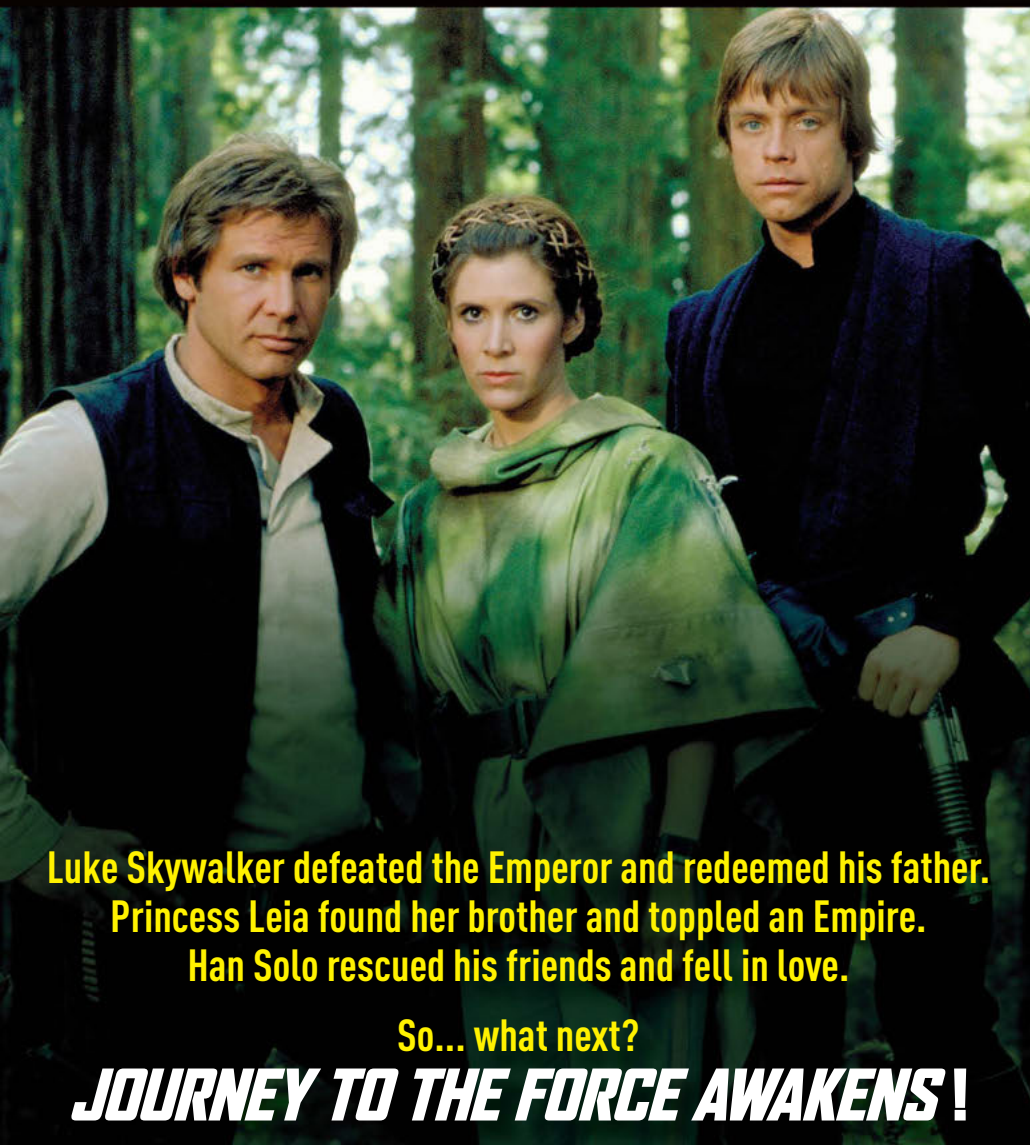
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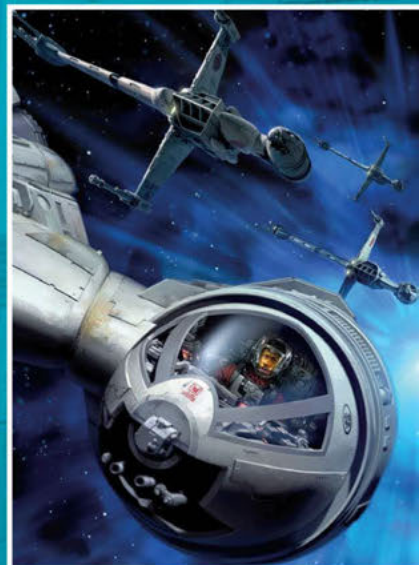
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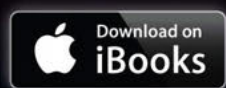
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